

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

For a brief but informative discussion of the text of Matthew, see Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," p.91.

1.7-8 Ἀσάφ, Ἀσάφ (Asaph, Asaph) {B}

The names for the genealogy from vv.6b-11 come from 1 Chr 3.5, 10-17. According to 1 Chr 3.10 (also 1 Kgs 15.9 ff), this king's name was Asa. However, it is clear that the name "Asaph" (so FC) is the earliest form of text preserved in the NT manuscripts, since manuscripts from several different families and text-types agree in reading "Asaph." In addition to the manuscript evidence, it is most likely that copyists would have noted that "Asaph" was the name of a psalmist (compare the titles of Ps 50 and 73-83) and would have corrected the name to read "Asa," the king of Judah. Later manuscripts, as well as the Textus Receptus, read Ἀσά (Asa). (See also the comments on v.10.)

Some interpreters think it most unlikely that the author of this Gospel would have written this list of names without consulting the OT names of the kings. They think that the name "Asaph" must, therefore, be a very ancient scribal error for "Asa." But it is possible that the Gospel writer had used a genealogical list in which the spelling error already existed. Among modern translations the name "Asa" is read in RSV, REB, NIV, NJB, TOB, and Seg. TEV uses the name "Asa" because of the principle of consistency between the Old and the New Testaments when referring to the same person. If translators follow this same principle in the receptor language, then the name "Asa" will be translated, even if the reading Ἀσάφ is accepted as original.

1.10 Ἀμώς, Ἀμώς (Amos, Amos) {B}

The textual evidence for the reading "Amos" is nearly the same as that which reads Ἀσάφ in vv.7 and 8. On the basis of such superior manuscript evidence, "Amos" is most likely the original reading. "Amos" is, however, an error for "Amon," the name of the king of Judah. In 1 Chr 3.14 most Greek manuscripts present the name correctly as Ἀμών or Ἀμμών, but Ἀμώς is read by a few Greek manuscripts. In the account concerning King Amon in 2 Kgs 21.18-19, 23-25; 2 Chr 33.20-25, several Greek manuscripts incorrectly

read Ἀμώς. So although the Masoretic text (Hebrew) consistently has the name "Amon," manuscripts of the Septuagint vary between the names "Amon" and "Amos."

According to Davies and Allison (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. I, p. 177), the name Amos "may represent a corruption in Matthew's source or in the post-Matthean textual tradition, or perhaps Matthew simply made an error. In the last instance, it might be intentional, a change designed to bring in a note of prophecy – just as the change of Asa to Asaph might hint at an interest in the psalmist's hopes."

Modern translations are divided between "Amos" (RSV, NRSV, NAB) and "Amon" (REB, NIV, NJB, TOB, FC, Seg). TEV uses the name "Amon" because of the principle of consistency between the Old and the New Testaments when referring to the same person. If translators follow this same principle in the receptor language, then the name "Amon" will be translated, even if the reading Ἀμώς is accepted as original.

1.11 ἐγέννησεν (became the father of) {A}

According to the text, Josiah was the father of Jechoniah (that is, Jehoiachin); but Josiah was in fact the father of Jehoiakim and the grandfather of Jechoniah. In order to make the text of Matthew agree with the genealogy in 1 Chr 3.15-16, several of the later uncial manuscripts, as well as a variety of other witnesses, have added the words τὸν Ἰωακίμ, Ἰωακίμ δὲ ἐγέννησεν (Jehoiakim, and Jehoiakim became the father of). Although it is possible that these words were accidentally omitted by a copyist, the manuscript support is stronger for the shorter text. Furthermore, when the name Ἰωακίμ is added, there are fifteen generations between David and the exile instead of fourteen.

1.16 τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός (the husband of Mary, from whom was born Jesus, the one called Christ) {A}

There are three main variant readings: (1) "And Jacob begot Joseph *the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ*"; (2) "and Jacob begot Joseph, *to whom being engaged the virgin Mary bore Jesus, who is called Christ,*" and (3) "Jacob begot Joseph; Joseph, *to whom was betrothed Mary the virgin, begot Jesus who is called the Christ.*" Among modern translations the third reading is followed only by Moffatt, who says, "Jacob the father of Joseph, and Joseph (to whom the virgin Mary was betrothed) the father of Jesus, who is called 'Christ.'"

The manuscript support for the first reading is extremely good. The second reading probably arose because a copyist thought the wording “the husband of Mary” might mislead a reader to think that Jesus was the physical son of Mary and her husband Joseph. So the wording was changed to “being engaged,” in agreement with the verb *μνηστεύεσθαι* (being engaged) in v. 18. As for the third reading, a Syriac manuscript of the fourth century is the only support for this reading, which probably is the result of a copyist’s having carelessly followed the standard genealogical pattern in which every name is repeated.

1.18 Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (of Jesus Christ) {B}

The great majority of manuscripts read “Jesus Christ.” Other variant readings include (1) “Christ Jesus,” (2) “Jesus,” and (3) “Christ.” It is difficult to decide which is the original reading. On the one hand, the manuscript support for “Jesus Christ” is very strong. But, on the other hand, the presence of the definite article *τοῦ* before the name “Jesus Christ” is very unusual in the NT and seems to suggest that “Jesus Christ” is not the original reading. Furthermore, copyists often expanded the names “Jesus” and “Christ” by adding other words; but here the reading “Christ” in some manuscripts may have originated under the influence of the words *ἕως τοῦ Χριστοῦ* in v. 17. And the reading “Jesus” may have originated under the influence of v. 21, which says, “you shall call his name Jesus.”

If translators follow any of the readings with the name *Χριστοῦ*, they must decide whether the name here functions as a proper name or as a title. The presence of the definite article *τοῦ*, combined with the emphasis in Matthew on Jesus as Son of David, leads some interpreters to understand *Χριστοῦ* here as a title. Compare NRSV: “Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way.”

1.18 γένεσις (birth) {B}

Both *γένεσις* and the variant reading *γέννησις* mean “birth,” but *γένεσις* also means “creation,” “generation,” and “genealogy” (compare v. 1). The word *γέννησις* means “begetting” or “birth,” and it became the usual word in later Christian writings to refer to the Nativity. It is easy to understand why copyists confused these two nouns since they are written and pronounced similarly.

Here in v. 18, early manuscripts of several text-types support the reading in the UBS⁴ text. Furthermore, copyists would have tended to substitute the word *γέννησις*, with its more specialized meaning, for the noun *γένεσις*,

which had been used in the different sense of “genealogy” (or, “birth-record”) in v. 1. Since γένεσις should be translated “birth” or “origin” here in this verse (unlike its translation in v. 1), both γένεσις and γέννησις will be translated the same way in the receptor language here.

1.25 υἱόν (a son) {A}

The Textus Receptus, following several uncials and most minuscules, inserts the article τόν before υἱόν and adds αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον (her firstborn son) from Luke 2.7.

2.4 Segmentation

If a break is made after the pronoun αὐτῶν, the following four words may be punctuated as a question, as in TEV: “...and asked them, ‘Where will the Messiah be born?’”

2.18 κλαυθμός (wailing) {B}

The longer reading, θρῆνος καὶ κλαυθμός (a song of grief and wailing), appears to be a scribal addition in order to make the wording agree more closely with the Septuagint text of Jer 31.15 (which is 38.15 in the Greek text). This longer reading is in the Textus Receptus and lies behind the rendering of the AV, “lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning.”

3.16 [αὐτῷ] ([to him]) {C}

The combination of Greek manuscripts, early versions, and Church Fathers gives strong support to the reading without the pronoun αὐτῷ, followed by RSV, NIV, REB, NJB, TOB, and Seg. On the other hand, it is possible that the pronoun is original but was omitted by copyists who thought it was not necessary. The pronoun αὐτῷ emphasizes either (a) that the vision was seen by Jesus only or (b) that the vision was for his benefit. In order to show the uncertainty regarding whether the pronoun is original, it has been put in brackets.

3.16 [καὶ] ἐρχόμενον ([and] coming) {C}

The reading which has the conjunction καί has the support of diverse textual groups and is therefore placed in the text. But since καί is absent from early manuscripts of both the Alexandrian and the Western text-types,

it may not be original. To reflect this doubt, καί is put in brackets. The meaning is the same regardless of which reading is followed. The difference is simply one of style.

4.10 ὑπάγε (go away) {A}

If the words ὀπίσω μου (behind me) were originally in the text, no satisfactory reason can be found to explain their omission. On the other hand, if they were originally absent, copyists who remembered the words of Jesus to Peter in Matt 16.23 (ὑπάγε ὀπίσω μου, Σατανᾶ [Get behind me, Satan]) would have been likely to add them here.

4.17 μετανοεῖτε, ἥγγικεν γάρ (repent, for [the kingdom of heaven] is at hand) {A}

The words μετανοεῖτε (repent) and γάρ (for) are absent from the Old Syriac and one manuscript of the Old Latin. It is possible that these words were not original but were rather added under the influence of the similar wording in 3.2. But the Greek manuscripts, as well as the overwhelming agreement of the rest of the ancient versions and Church Fathers for the longer text, makes it likely that this text is original.

5.4-5 μακάριοι ... παρακληθήσονται. (5) μακάριοι ... τὴν γῆν. (Blessed ... they shall be comforted. [5] Blessed ... the earth.) {B}

If v. 5 had originally followed immediately after v. 3, with their opposition of heaven (v. 3) and earth (v. 5), it is unlikely that any copyist would have placed v. 4 between them. On the other hand, as early as the second century, some copyists reversed the order of the two beatitudes in vv. 4 and 5 so as to produce this opposition and to bring πτωχοί (poor) and πραεῖς (meek) into closer connection. Among modern translations NJB and TOB reverse the order of vv. 4 and 5, although the verse numbers are not changed.

5.11 [ψευδόμενοι] ([lying/telling a falsehood]) {C}

It is uncertain whether the participle ψευδόμενοι should be included or omitted from the text. On the one hand, if the participle is original, its absence in the Western tradition can be accounted for as the result of copyists' changing the wording to agree with the form of the beatitude in Luke 6.22. On the other hand, if the participle is not original, more than one copyist would have been tempted to insert ψευδόμενοι in order to limit the

wide generalization in Jesus' teaching, and to make explicit what was considered to be implicit in the meaning (compare 1 Pet 4.15-16), that is, that Christians are not blessed when people speak evil about them with good reason. Morris (*The Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 102, n. 36) notes that ψευδόμενοι is implied, "for what the enemy said would not really be evil if it were true." In order to show uncertainty about whether copyists added or omitted this participle, it is included within brackets. REB and Seg follow the shorter reading.

5.22 αὐτοῦ (of him/his) {B}

It does not seem likely that copyists would have omitted the word εἰκῇ (without a cause) after αὐτοῦ if it had been original. Although the reading with εἰκῇ is widespread from the second century onwards, it is much more likely that the word was added by copyists in order to soften Jesus' extreme demand.

5.32 καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ, μοιχᾶται

(and whoever marries a divorced woman, commits adultery) {B}

The reading of manuscript B (ὁ...γαμήσας [the one marrying...]) seems to have been substituted for the reading found in the text in order to make the grammatical construction similar to the words ὁ ἀπολύων (the one divorcing...) at the beginning of this verse. The omission of καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ, μοιχᾶται in a few manuscripts may be due to copyists who considered these words unnecessary. That is, if "everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress [when she remarries]," then it would go without saying that "whoever marries a divorced woman [also] commits adultery."

The difference between ὃς ἐὰν γαμήσῃ and ὁ γαμήσας is basically a difference in style rather than meaning (Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, p. 122, n. b). Receptor language style and grammar must be considered regardless of the text that is followed.

5.44 ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς

(Love the enemies of you and pray for those persecuting you) {A}

Later manuscripts enrich the text by adding clauses from the parallel account in Luke 6.27-28. If clauses such as "bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you" were originally present in Matthew's account

of the Sermon on the Mount, their omission in early manuscripts of the Alexandrian, Western, and Egyptian traditions would be very difficult to explain. The fact that the additions come in different places in the different manuscripts and do not agree in wording suggests that they are all later scribal additions.

5.47 ἔθνικοί (Gentiles/pagans) {B}

In later manuscripts, followed by the Textus Receptus, the reading τελῶναι (tax collectors) appears to have been substituted for ἔθνικοί in order to bring the statement into closer parallelism with the preceding sentence. The Armenian version combines the reading τελῶναι with the form of the reading found in Luke 6.32-34 to read τελῶναι καὶ οἱ ἁμαρτωλοί (tax collectors and sinners).

6.4 σοι (to you [singular]) {B}

The phrase ἐν τῷ φανερῷ (openly) is absent from the earliest manuscripts of the Alexandrian, Western, and Egyptian types of text. It appears to have been added by copyists in order to make an explicit parallelism with the preceding words ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ (in secret). The point in the whole section, however, is not so much the openness of the Father's reward as its superiority to mere human approval (compare vv. 6 and 18).

6.6 σοι (to you [singular]) {B}

See the comments on v. 4.

6.8 ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν (the father of you) {A}

The expanded reading ὁ θεὸς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν (God, your Father) occurs nowhere else in Matthew and is a scribal addition reflecting the common placing together of "God" and "Father" in Paul's letters. The reading ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος (your heavenly Father), found in several later manuscripts, is obviously an addition made to agree with the wording of vv. 9 and 14. The occurrence of the first person pronoun ἡμῶν (of us) in several manuscripts is due to scribal error, since in later Greek the vowels η and υ were pronounced alike. FC says, "God, your Father," but it is not clear whether this is based on the variant reading or is the result of the translation principles followed.

6.13 πονηροῦ. (the Evil one/evil.) {A}

Early and important manuscripts of the Alexandrian, Western, and other types of text, as well as commentaries on the Lord's Prayer by early Church Fathers, end the Lord's Prayer with the word πονηροῦ in v.13. Copyists added several different endings in order to adapt the Prayer for use in worship in the early church. Additions include the following: (a) "for yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen" (so Seg); (b) "for yours is the kingdom and the glory forever. Amen"; and (c) "for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit forever. Amen."

6.15 ἀνθρώποις (to people) {C}

The words τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν (their trespasses) occur after the word ἀνθρώποις in many manuscripts, so that the text means "forgive [to] people their trespasses." These words may be original but were omitted by copyists as unnecessary since they occur in v.14. Or τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν may have been added by copyists in order to provide a balance with v.14a. Copyists added a verse after Mark 11.25 under the influence of this verse in Matthew; and since the addition in Mark does not have the words τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, they are probably not original here either. Even though the short text should be followed, it may be necessary in some languages to make the words τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν explicit in translation. It is not clear whether NIV is based on the longer reading or has added the words "their sins" for translational reasons.

6.18 σοι (to you [singular]) {A}

See the comments on v.4.

6.25 [ἢ τί πίητε] ([or what you shall drink]) {C}

On the one hand, the reading without the words ἢ τί πίητε may be original, and these words may have been added to the text to agree with the wording of v.31. NJB, TOB, and Seg follow this shorter text. On the other hand, these words may be original but may have been accidentally omitted because a copyist jumped from the ending of the verb φάγητε (eat) to the end of the verb πίητε. Since the evidence is evenly balanced between the two readings, these words are put in brackets to indicate doubt regarding the original text.

- 6.28 αὐξάνουσιν· οὐ κοπιῶσιν οὐδὲ νήθουσιν
(they grow; they do not toil nor spin [wool]) {B}

The original reading of Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲱ) appears to be “they do not card/comb (wool) neither do they spin nor toil.” (“To card wool” is to untangle and collect the wool fibers.) Some interpreters consider this to be the original reading, but it seems to have been one copyist’s error (ξένουσιν [= ξαίνουσιν] for αὐξάνουσιν), which was almost immediately corrected. A few other manuscripts reverse the order of the verbs “toil” and “spin.”

The major difference in most manuscripts, however, is between singular and plural forms of the verbs “grow,” “toil,” and “spin.” The verbs are plural in the text. The noun κρίνα (flowers, traditionally “lilies” in English translations) is neuter plural, and since neuter plural subjects take singular verb forms in Greek, the singular verb forms appear to be a correction for grammatical reasons. The difference is one of style and not meaning; so translators will need to use whichever form of the verb is appropriate in their receptor language.

- 6.33 τὴν βασιλείαν [τοῦ θεοῦ] καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ
(the kingdom [of God] and the righteousness of him) {C}

Some manuscripts have “the kingdom of God and his righteousness” or “the kingdom of heaven (τῶν οὐρανῶν) and his righteousness.” Others read “the kingdom and his righteousness.” The shorter reading, “the kingdom and his righteousness,” best explains the origins of the others since copyists would add “of God” or “of heaven” rather than delete these words if they had been present originally. However, Matthew seldom refers to the “kingdom” without a modifier, so the absence of a modifier such as “of God” or “of heaven” in several manuscripts may be due to accidental omission (see Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. I, p. 660, n. 25). To show the doubt regarding the original text, the words τοῦ θεοῦ have been put in brackets. Even if the shorter text is followed for text-critical reasons, translators may wish to make explicit that “the kingdom” is “the kingdom of God” or “his kingdom” (NJB and NIV).

7.11 Segmentation

This verse may be translated as an exclamation (so many modern translations) or statement (TOB) as in the text or as a (rhetorical) question. See also Luke 11.13.

7.13 πλατεῖα ἡ πύλη (wide the gate) {B}

The words ἡ πύλη (the gate) are absent in v. 13 from several manuscripts and Church Fathers. NJB, following this variant reading, says, "Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to destruction is wide and spacious." It is possible that ἡ πύλη are not original but were introduced into the text to complete the parallelism with v. 14. But the external evidence is overwhelming in support of the longer text. The words ἡ πύλη in vv. 13 and 14 were probably omitted by some copyists who failed to understand that the intended picture is that of a roadway leading to a gate.

7.14 τί (How!) {B}

The interrogative pronoun τί has wide manuscript support. It is often translated "Which?" or "What?" but is used here to represent the Semitic exclamation *ḥā* ("how!"). But copyists, not understanding this unusual usage, changed τί to the conjunction ὅτι (because/for), which is found in v. 13. NAB expresses the exclamatory sense of this pronoun: "How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life."

7.14 ἡ πύλη (the gate) {A}

See the comments on v. 13.

7.24 ὁμοιωθήσεται (he/she will be made like) {B}

The variant reading has little significance for translation since the difference is more one of style than of meaning. The future passive verb form has the support of good and diverse manuscripts. Copyists probably changed the passive verb to the first person singular active form ὁμοιώσω αὐτόν (I will compare him), especially if they remembered the form of the saying in Luke 6.47 ("I will show you what he is like").

aici apărând forma mixtă: «Iisus Hristos» sau pur și simplu (în multe limbi) «Jesuscrist/Jesuschrist».

Evangelistiile lui Matei și Luca afirmă că lui Iisus numele nu i-a fost dat întâmplător. Cum se obișnuiește la marile personaje biblice, numele este indisolubil legat de misiunea sa și, ca atare, în ultimă instanță, răspunde planului divin. Explicația dată de Evanghelia după Matei pune în legătură numele de Iisus (*Ieșua*) cu substantivul pentru „salvare, mântuire” (*yeșua*). „... și vei chema numele Lui: Iisus, căci El va mântui poporul Său de păcatele lor”, îi spune îngerul, mesagerul divin, lui Iosif, bărbatul Mariei, mama lui Iisus (Matei 1,21). O etimologie similară, inteligibilă numai pornind de la limba ebraică, se găsește în Filip din Alexandria, evreu de cultură elenistă (10 î.H.-60 d.H.). Acesta explică astfel etimologia numelui lui Iisus, succesorul lui Moise: „Iosua/Iisus [înseamnă] mântuirea Domnului” (*Schimbări de nume* 121). Evanghelia lui Luca merge pe aceeași linie, deși nu total explicit, când narează vizita îngerului la Maria, ca să o anunțe că va zămisi un fiu și va adăuga: „și vei chema numele lui Iisus” (1,31). În alt loc, în aceeași evanghelie, fiul Mariei este pus de trei ori în legătură cu termenul *mântuire* (1,69; 1,77; 2,11). Merită reținut ultimul citat, care corespunde unui alt anunț al îngerului, în acest caz făcut păstorilor, care face trimitere la nașterea lui Iisus: „Că vi s-a născut azi Mântuitor” [*sōter*]. În acest fel, în Evanghelia după Luca semnificația numelui lui Iisus anticipează atribuirea propriu-zisă a numelui, în ziua circumciziei (2,21).

Numele lui Iisus este ales de părinții săi chiar dacă, potrivit evangheliilor, le este comunicat de un mesager divin: lui Iosif (Evanghelia lui Matei) și Mariei (Evanghelia lui Luca). Urmează Iosif și Maria obiceiul contemporan de a pune copilului un nume luat din galeria marilor eroi ai Israelului, într-un moment în care identitatea iudaică vrea să se afirme în fața puternicului ocupant roman? Să fi fost acesta Iosua, căpetenia victorioasă care a condus poporul Israelului să ocupe pământul făgăduit de Dumnezeu și să-i alunge pe dușmani? Motivația adusă de cele două evanghelii canonice (Matei și Luca) care narează episoade din copilăria lui Iisus este aceeași: numele pe care-l primește copilul este obiectul unei revelații divine și trimite la o misiune care transcende întreaga perspectivă, inclusiv pe aceea a eliberării politice. Cu alte cuvinte, normalitatea numelui lui Iisus printre galileenii sec. I va fi întreruptă de singularitatea purtătorului. În ultimă instanță, viața lui Iisus va arăta importanța numelui pe care îl poartă.

4.2. LOCUL ȘI DATA NAȘTERII

Mărturia izvoarelor istorice despre locul de origine a lui Iisus este unanimă: Nazaret. O afirmă documentele Noului Testament, atât evangheliile, cât și Faptele Apostolilor (2,22; 3,6; 4,10; 6,14 ș. a.). Nazaret este prezentat ca „satul lui”¹ (Marcu 6,1 || Matei 13,54) și ca „satul lor” [al lui Iosif și al Mariei]” (Luca 2,39)², unde le trăiesc familiile. Un galileu ca Iisus, Natanael, viitor ucenic, se poate întreba cu ironie: „Din Nazaret poate fi [ieși] ceva bun?” (Ioan 1,46). Mulțimea care-l însoțește pe Iisus în intrarea lui triumfală în Ierusalim, cu câteva zile înaintea Patimilor, spune: „Acesta este Iisus, proorocul din Nazaretul Galileii” (Matei 21,11). La cealaltă extremă, autoritățile religioase din Ierusalim replică astfel lui Nicodim, o căpetenie a evreilor care îndrăznise să se ducă la Iisus noaptea: „Nu cumva și tu ești din Galileea? Cercetează [Scriptura] și vezi că din Galileea nu s-a ridicat prooroc ” (Ioan 7,52).

În Talmud, Iisus (*Ieșu*) este invariabil *ha-notsrí*, adjectiv care înseamnă „Nazarineanul”. Deși diferite, adjectivele grecești *nazarēnos* și *nazōraios* merg în aceeași direcție, ca și substantivul grec *Nazara*, care apare alături de *Nazaret*, denumirea greacă cea mai obișnuită. Iar în ebraica modernă, creștinii sunt desemnați ca *ha-notsrim*, „nazarinenii”, în acord cu uzul din Talmud, atestat în Noul Testament: „secta nazarinenilor”³ este expresia utilizată de avocatul Tertullus, care vorbește în numele căpeteniilor Sanhedrinului, acuzându-l pe Paul în fața procuratorului Felix (Faptele 24,5).

În fața numărului notabil de atestări și a concordanței dintre ele, mulți autori au apărut teza relației exclusive a lui Iisus cu localitatea galileeană Nazaret. Iisus, galileean, s-ar fi născut și ar fi trăit în această așezare din Galileea de Jos până la vârsta de circa treizeci de ani. Dar evangheliile lui Matei și Luca fac distincție între locul nașterii

¹ În Biblia Ortodoxă românească: „patria sa”.

² În Biblia Ortodoxă românească: „cetatea lor”.

³ În Biblia Ortodoxă românească: „eresul nazarinenilor”.

și locul de origine al lui Iisus. Betleem, în Iudeea, ar fi locul unde s-a născut, iar Nazaret – locul unde și-a petrecut copilăria, adolescența și tinerețea. Mai ales în Evanghelia după Luca se spune explicit că localitatea galileeană Nazaret este locul „unde fusese crescut” (4,16), în timp ce nașterea este situată în Betleem (2,4.6-7; la fel Matei 2,1).

Trebuie, așadar, să ne întrebăm unde s-a născut Iisus: în Nazaretul Galileei sau în Betleemul Iudeei? Care este valoarea istorică a tradiției creștine care situează nașterea lui Iisus în Betleem, satul lui David, marele rege al Israelului?

4.2.1. Locul: Betleem

Narațiunile din evangheliile lui Matei și Luca despre copilăria lui Iisus coincid în multe puncte, dar prezintă și unele divergențe. Cele mai importante puncte de divergență privesc succesiunea faptelor și situația legală a lui Iosif și a Mariei la nașterea lui Iisus.

În Matei, informația despre naștere și despre prima perioadă din viața copilului Iisus este asociată exclusiv cu Betleem, chiar dacă îngerul îi apare în somn lui Iosif într-un loc nedeterminat. De la începutul Evangheliei, Betleem este unica așezare menționată și într-o „casă” din Betleemul Iudeii înțelepții veniți din Orient îi găsesc pe Maria și pe fiul ei Iisus (2,11). E o casă care aparține lui Iosif, descendent al lui David și membru al familiei marelui rege al Israelului, sau Iosif, Maria și Iisus stau în casa unei rude a lui Iosif, și ea din neamul lui David? Matei spune și că Irod poruncește să fie uciși toți copiii din Betleem „de doi ani și mai jos, după timpul pe care îl aflase de la magi” (2,16). Această informație ne face să presupunem că vizita înțelepților are loc la un anumit timp după nașterea lui Iisus, nu imediat. După ce ei dispar din scenă, începe persecuția lui Irod. Matei consemnează că Iosif, cu Maria și copilul, trebuie să plece noaptea în grabă și să se exileze în Egipt. La Betleem nu se vor mai întoarce: Iosif se teme să revină în Iudeea (2,22), guvernată de Arhelau, fiul lui Irod, persecutorul acum mort, și-și duce familia la Nazaret, un mic sat din Galileea, unde vor începe o nouă viață.

Perspectiva lui Luca este diferită. Maria locuiește la Nazaret și acolo, în casa ei, primește vizita îngerului Gavriil. Despre Iosif nu se spune explicit unde locuiește, dar, potrivit lui Luca, trebuie să meargă să se înscrie în Betleemul Iudeii: „s-a suit din Galileea, din cetatea

Nazaret" (2,4) ca să se înscrie „în cetatea sa" (2,3). Pe de altă parte, când, după nașterea lui Iisus, se vor întoarce din Iudeea în Nazaret, Iosif și Maria vor merge „în cetatea lor Nazaret" (2,39). Pare că Iosif ar avea două sate de origine: Betleem și Nazaret. În orice caz, nu are casă în Betleem, nici, cel puțin la început, nu-l primește vreo rudă de vreme ce, așa cum spune Luca, soția lui naște în grajdul unui lăcaș public destinat primirii caravanelor și găzduirii călătorilor. După opt zile de la nașterea lui Iisus, copilul este circumcis, așa cum cere Legea lui Moise, se pare chiar la Betleem. La patruzeci de zile după naștere se duc la Templul din Ierusalim pentru ritualul de purificare a mamei, Maria, tot în conformitate cu Legea lui Moise. De la Ierusalim nu se mai întorc la Betleem, ci se duc în Galileea, în satul lor, Nazaret (2,39). Se întorc deci în satul din care au plecat spre Betleem.

Al doilea punct de divergență între Matei și Luca se referă la situația legală în care se găsesc Iosif și Maria la nașterea lui Iisus. Ambele evanghelii coincid în a afirma că, atunci când Iisus este zămislit în pântecul Mariei, aceasta și Iosif sunt uniți prin acord matrimonial¹, sunt, adică, legal soț și soție, chiar dacă nu locuiesc împreună (Matei 1,18; Luca 1,34). Problema stă în a afla când încep conviețuirea matrimonială. După Matei, înainte de nașterea lui Iisus. Îngerul Domnului îl sfătuiește pe Iosif să o primească (acasă) pe cea care legal îi este soție (1,20) și Iosif se supune imediat (1,24): Iosif și Maria devin soț și soție în sensul deplin al termenilor, legal, dar mai ales social, căci trăiesc sub același acoperiș. Situația pe care o presupune Evanghelia lui Matei corespunde obiceiurilor evreiești ale timpului: se semna *ketubah* sau acordul matrimonial, dar proaspeții soți nu își începeau conviețuirea, ci își pregăteau noul cămin, mai ales soția, care rămânea în casa părinților punându-și la punct zestrea. După un an se făcea nunta, cu ocazia căreia mireasa era adusă în noul cămin.

După Luca 1,27 și 2,5, când Iosif și Maria ajung la Betleem și se naște Iisus, ei sunt în aceeași situație de la Nazaret. Sunt legal căsătoriți, dar ceremonia nunții nu pare a fi avut loc. Se menține, așadar, o situație ciudată în ochii oamenilor, căci Iosif va fi tatăl legal al unui copil (acordul matrimonial cu Maria își produce toate efectele) fără să fi conviețuit cu soția lui legitimă. Cu alte cuvinte, situația lui Iosif și a Mariei este neobișnuită din punct de vedere social, căci nu

¹ În Biblia Ortodoxă românească: Maria este logodită cu Iosif.

corespunde obiceiurilor nuptiale stabilite și această situație poate provoca chiar clevetiri legate de adevăratul tată al copilului care trebuie să se nască. Într-adevăr, au existat atunci și au continuat să existe dubii, ale lui Iosif, care, în fața sarcinii neașteptate a Mariei, vrea să divorțeze (Matei 1,19), și ale oamenilor din Nazaret care, în mod semnificativ, îl identifică pe Iisus după mamă, nu după tată: „fiul Mariei” (Marcu 6,3). (V. 4.3)

Rămân însă două afirmații comune lui Matei și Luca. Prima este legată de locul nașterii lui Iisus: Betleem (Matei 2,1 și Luca 2,4.15). De ce aceste două izvoare istorice, independente și destul de divergente între ele, coincid în această informație? De unde le-a parvenit? După unele opinii, tradiția creștină timpurie a situat nașterea lui Iisus la Betleem pentru a justifica – și demonstra, în fața obiecțiilor iudaice! – că Iisus este realmente Mesia al Israelului, cel așteptat. Într-adevăr, Mesia trebuia să fie urmaș al lui David, iar orașul lui David este Betleem. Afirmațiile lui Matei (1,20; 2,6) și Luca (1,27; 1,32-33; 1,69; 2,4; 2,11) despre Iisus ca Mesia descendent din David ar putea induce ideea că opțiunea pentru Betleem e mai mult o dată de tip teologic, decât una strict istorică. Dar, dacă este o informație menită a „dovedi” că Iisus este descendent al lui David, creată de comunitatea timpurie, de ce nu sunt mai multe afinități în relatările despre copilăria lui în Matei și Luca și, concret, în referirile la Betleem în cele două evanghelii?

A doua afirmație în care coincid Matei și Luca se referă la o deplasare intempestivă și dificilă în contextul evenimentelor legate de nașterea lui Iisus. La Matei, aceasta se concretizează în fuga bruscă, în timpul nopții, din Betleem – pe atunci domiciliul lui Iisus copil – și o călătorie incertă în Egipt provocată de persecuția lui Irod, soldată cu exilul întregii familii (părinții și copilul), care se va prelungi până la moartea persecutorului (Matei 2,1-23). La Luca, are loc o deplasare legată tot de o decizie politică, aceea a unui cens universal pe care l-ar fi ordonat împăratul roman Augustus. Acest fapt implică riscanta călătorie a unei femei, cu sarcina în fază avansată, de la Nazaret, localitatea de domiciliu, la Betleem, și o naștere în condiții foarte dificile, departe de casă și fără nici un fel de ajutor. În relatarea lui Matei, Iisus este un fugar și un exilat; în Luca, un emigrant și un străin. Betleemul este în centrul evenimentelor. După Matei, fiul Mariei, urmărit de Irod, trebuie să părăsească noaptea Betleemul și să fugă în Egipt. Ce verosimilitate istorică are această călătorie în

afara Israelului, care include rămânerea, mai mult sau mai puțin timp, într-o țară străină? S-a remarcat deseori că relatarea lui Matei despre fuga în Egipt se situează în niște parametri de caracter tipologic. S-a vrut stabilirea unui paralelism între destinul lui Iisus exilat și destinul Israelului, poporul său, mulți ani sclav în această țară. De aceea, perioada egipteană a lui Iisus ar avea puțină bază istorică. În Luca, într-adevăr, nu este menționată. Dar Luca ar avea rațiuni „teologice” să treacă sub tăcere un element ca acesta. Într-adevăr, în Evanghelia sa, Luca evită cu grijă călătoriile lui Iisus adult în afara teritoriului Israelului: călătoria în Fenicia (v. Marcu 7,24), trecerea ulterioară prin Decapolis (v. Marcu 7,31), o altă călătorie, anterioară, la Decapolis (v. Marcu 5,20) și una în Caesarea lui Filip (v. Marcu 8,27). După Luca, itinerariul lui Iisus începe în Galileea și se sfârșește la Ierusalim. Doar prima comunitate creștină va depăși granițele Israelului și-i va predica Evanghelia: Samaria (Faptele 8,5), Siria (9,22), Fenicia (11,19)... Ca atare, dacă Matei se arată interesat să sublinieze destinul lui Iisus ca exilat, Luca are motive să-l rețină în Israel. Rămâne, deci, deschisă, din punct de vedere istoric, posibilitatea ca Iisus, cu părinții săi, să fi trebuit să fugă în Egipt ca să scape de amenințarea morții venită dinspre Irod, întruchipată de relatarea despre masacrul copiilor din Betleem.

În ceea ce privește celelalte două evanghelii – Marcu și Ioan – datele sunt foarte sărace. În Marcu nu e nici o referire la Betleem. Narațiunea îl prezintă pentru prima oară pe Iisus venind din Nazaretul Galileei (1,9). Este vorba despre o informație comună celor patru evanghelii și care, cum am spus, trebuie acceptată ca dovedită: Nazaret este localitatea de origine a lui Iisus. De aceea, tăcerea lui Marcu în ce privește Betleem ca locul nașterii lui Iisus nu permite nici o concluzie. În Evanghelia lui Ioan, unica referință ce se poate analiza este 7,42. J. P. Meier subliniază pe bună dreptate ambiguitatea acestui verset: „N-a zis, oare, Scriptura că Hristos va să vină din sămânța lui David și din Betleem, cetatea lui David?” Dacă fraza se ia în sens propriu, ea afirmă că Iisus, prin faptul de a nu se fi născut în Betleem, nu poate fi Mesia. Dar dacă e citită în cheie ironică, atunci cei care o rostesc afirmă, de fapt, ceea ce vor să nege: trebuie presupus doar că cititorii știu că Iisus s-a născut la Betleem, în timp ce aceia care o pronunță ignoră acest lucru. În consecință, ceea ce se vrea o negație devine în fapt o afirmație, o dovadă în sprijinul mesianismului lui Iisus. Nu ar fi unicul caz în Evanghelia lui

Ioan de ironie fină și copioasă. La fel, soldații care îl batjocoresc pe Iisus și îl salută cu: „Salve, rege al iudeilor!” (Ioan 19,3)¹ afirmă – crezând că neagă – ceea ce cititorul știe și recunoaște: că Iisus e rege. Cu inscripția de pe cruce („Iisus Nazarineanul, Regele iudeilor”, 19,19) se întâmplă un lucru asemănător. Așa încât, este foarte posibil ca în Ioan 7,42, cei ce vorbesc să afirme contrariul a ceea ce vor să afirme, adică exact ceea ce vrea evanghelistul să-i facă să spună. Nu ar fi de mirare ca Ioan 7,42 să se refere *de facto* la Betleem, satul lui David, ca locul nașterii lui Iisus.

Rezumând, nu există argumente decisive împotriva afirmației lui Matei și Luca că Iisus s-a născut în Betleemul Iudeei, localitate unde au ajuns Maria, însărcinată, și soțul ei legal Iosif, după o lungă călătorie de circa două sute de kilometri. E vorba, probabil, de o călătorie complicată de sarcina Mariei, dar nu știm în ce lună era când s-a mutat în Betleem cu Iosif. După o perioadă de durată necunoscută, în timpul căreia s-a născut copilul pe care Maria îl purta în pânțece, se întorc la Nazaret. Nu poate fi exclus, însă, ca înainte de asta să se fi refugiat în Egipt, în fața amenințării cu moartea a lui Irod. Acesta ar fi nucleul istoric al evenimentelor legate de nașterea lui Iisus.

4.2.2. Motivul: un cens al lui Irod în timpul lui August

Întrebarea care se impune imediat este: ce motiv a determinat nașterea lui Iisus în afara Nazaretului și ce i-a făcut pe părinții lui, Iosif și Maria, să plece la Betleem? Evanghelia lui Luca atribuie deplasarea la Betleem unui cens (*apografē*) decretat de împăratul Octavianus Augustus în tot Imperiul (2,1) și-l pune în legătură cu Quirinius, guvernatorul Siriei (2,2). Iosif și Maria s-ar fi dus să se declare la Betleem pentru a se supune decretului. Dar, în timpul domniei lui Augustus (29 î.H.-14 d.H.), Quirinius a fost guvernator al Siriei, cu atribuții asupra noii provincii Iudeea doar începând din anul 6 d.H., când Arhelau, fiul lui Irod, a fost demis și Iudeea a devenit provincie romană (Antichități 17,8,2; 17,13,2). În acel moment Augustus a decretat, prin intermediul lui Quirinius, un cens provincial (nu în tot Imperiul) care avea ca obiectiv ultim organizarea plății impozitelor

¹ În Biblia Ortodoxă românească: „Bucură-te, regele iudeilor!”

din noua provincie către fiscul imperial (nu și în Galileea și Perea, guvernate de Antipa, sau în Traconitida, guvernată de Filip, ambii – fii ai lui Irod). Acest cens a provocat revolta condusă de Iuda Galileeanul, înăbușită chiar de Quirinius (Faptele 5,37; Antichități 18,1,1) (v. 3.3.3.2.). Ca atare, nu acesta a putut fi censul care i-a purtat pe Iosif și Maria la Betleem, căci, când s-a născut Iisus, regele Iudeei era Irod (Matei 2,1; Luca 1,5), iar acesta a murit în anul 4 î.H., cu zece ani înainte de censul lui Quirinius.

În plus, în timpul ultimilor ani ai lui Irod, guvernatorii Siriei au fost alții: C. Sestius Saturninus (10/9-7/6 î.H.) și P. Quinctilius Varus (7/6-4 î.H.). Ceea ce ne determină să credem că censul menționat de Luca 2,2 corespunde ultimului din cele două decretate de Irod, cel din 7/6 î.H. – în tot regatul, în conformitate cu nevoile interne ale administrației sale fiscale, complet autonomă față de Roma, și în dorința de a-i face pe plac împăratului Augustus. Se știe că Augustus a impulsionat organizarea de censuri în Imperiu, atât în provinciile de rang imperial – cum era Iudeea începând din anul 6 d.H. – sau senatorial, cât și în teritoriile guvernate de regi aliați ai Romei. Pe de altă parte, tocmai se încheiase censul cetățenilor romani din Imperiul Roman promovat de Augustus în anul 8 î.H. Lui Irod nu i-a scăpat interesul împăratului pentru censuri, într-un moment când era interesat să-i câștige bunăvoința în urma unor dificultăți politice pe care le avusese cu el.

Sunt deci două posibilități de explicare a informației din Luca 2,1 despre un cens general în tot imperiul care ar fi fost decretat de Augustus. Ori Luca a concentrat diversele censuri provinciale într-unul singur, care ar fi fost general (cum, în fapt, Augustus nu a convocat niciodată); ori se referă la censul general al cetățenilor romani (nu al locuitorilor din tot Imperiul) din anul 8 î.H., convocat de împărat. Oricum, este limpede voința Evangheliei de a sublinia importanța istorică a nașterii lui Iisus, punând-o în legătură cu Augustus și censul lui Quirinius.

Pe de altă parte, trebuie remarcat că Irod nu mai făcuse de 14 ani recensământul supușilor săi. Ultimul fusese în anul 20/19 î.H. și probabil că acum trebuiau actualizate datele. Censul decretat de Irod în 7/6 î.H., care includea un jurământ de fidelitate față de Augustus și față de el, este consemnat explicit de Josephus Flavius (Antichități 15,10,4). Și Luca 2,2. face aluzie la censul lui Irod într-un text care trebuie tradus astfel: „această înscriere (= censul lui Irod din anul 7/6 î.H.) a fost anterioară aceleia care s-a făcut când Quirinius era

guvernator al Siriei (anul 6 d.H.)". Într-adevăr, așa cum menționează Tertullian (*Împotriva lui Marcion* 4,19,10), guvernatorul Siriei era Saturninus când Irod, regele Iudeei, a decretat ultimul lui census.

Pe de altă parte, se pare că Irod, rege alat al Romei, dar autonom, făcea recensămintele în conformitate cu obiceiurile tradiționale evreiești și nu în stilul censurilor provinciale romane. Sistemul tradițional al recensămintelor în Israel, menținut din 200 î.H. – și probabil deja dinainte, din timpul perioadei post-exil – era obligatoriu și pentru bărbați și pentru femei; mai mult, criteriul censului și taxării, spre deosebire de cel al censurilor provinciale romane – erau persoanele fizice (*tributum capitis*), nu proprietățile (*tributum soli*). De aceea censul realizat de Quirinius, la ordinul lui Augustus, a fost unul tipic roman când, pentru prima oară și nu fără o puternică opoziție a evreilor, s-a elaborat un cadastru al proprietăților pornind de la o declarație sub jurământ (*akroasis*) (Antichități 18,1,1). Censul tradițional iudeu – pe care Irod, cu pragmatismul său politic, nu l-a modificat – avea ca obiectiv înregistrarea tuturor persoanelor fizice între 12-14 și 65 de ani, în vederea stabilirii impozitului *per capita*, anual și egal pentru toți. Deja Legea lui Moise preciza această egalitate (Exodul 30,12-15: „Să nu dea bogatul mai mult, nici săracul mai puțin”).

Impozitul pe proprietățile agricole era tipic roman, căci, potrivit mentalității iudaice, pământul aparține numai lui Dumnezeu, nu poate fi deci evaluat, nici înregistrat cadastral în vederea impunerii fiscale: Domnul i-a dat țara poporului său, el îi este unicul proprietar și nici o altă autoritate n-o poate supune sau domina (v. 3.3.3.2.). Fiscalitatea era împovărătoare în timpul lui Irod, dat fiind că monarhul avea nevoie de bani mulți pentru marile lucrări publice din regatul său și pentru darurile către orașele grecești din afară. Regele a decretat tot felul de impozite pe recolte și comerț, dar s-a abținut de la *tributum soli*, care ar fi lezat profund sensibilitatea iudaică.

Așadar, călătoria lui Iosif și a Mariei din Nazaret la Betleem poate fi înțeleasă mai bine din perspectiva censului lui Irod din 7/6 î.H. Obiectivul era înscrierea pe listele menite a ajuta stabilirea de *tributum capitis* pentru fiecare locuitor adult, bărbat sau femeie, din regatul lui Irod. Fiecare trebuia să se înregistreze „în cetatea sa” (Luca 2,3). Decretul lui Irod lăsa libertate de interpretare în acest punct. Iosif ar fi putut să o facă la Nazaret, unde-și avea domiciliul,

dar a ales Betleemul, localitatea de origine. Decizia era de înțeles în cazul unui bărbat ca el, evreu pios din neamul lui David, marele rege al Israelului. Căci familia lui Iosif provenea din Betleem și emigrase de puține generații în Galileea unde, evident, originea îi era cunoscută și respectată. Așa că a hotărât – în conformitate cu Legea lui Moise și cu facilitățile acordate de Irod – să se înscrie în localitatea de origine a tribului (tribul lui Iuda) și a neamului său (neamul lui David) și să se supună astfel decretului lui Irod.

Pe de altă parte, decizia lui a fost probabil întărită de situația anormală și neobișnuită social, care declanșase criticile și clevetirile oamenilor din Nazaret: o fată din același sat, Maria, cu care Iosif era unit prin acord matrimonial, rămăsese însărcinată înainte de începerea conviețuirii lor. Iosif nu a divorțat însă de Maria și a menținut acordul matrimonial. Puternica presiune socială și dubiile malițioase despre paternitatea reală a copilului au fost un motiv în plus ca Iosif să-și ia soția și să pornească împreună spre Betleem. Reacția rudelor de aici nu pare să fi fost pozitivă, de vreme ce Maria a dat naștere copilului în condiții precare într-un grajd din afara orașului.

Oricum, amintirea nașterii lui Iisus s-a fixat curând în memoria comunității creștine din Iudeea. Doar așa se explică interesul împăratului Hadrian de a elimina orice urmă, păgânizând locul. Căci imediat după al Doilea Război Iudaic (132-135 d.H.), Hadrian a ordonat ștergerea amintirilor creștine din locul de la Ierusalim unde murise și fusese înmormântat Iisus și a dispus ridicarea unui lăcaș de cult greco-roman într-un alt punct la fel de sacru pentru evreii creștini: peștera din Betleem legată de nașterea lui. În peșteră, așa cum povestește Sfântul Ieronim (*Epistula ad Paulinum* 58), se va institui cultul lui Tammuz-Adonis, iubitul lui Venus, mort și plâns de cei ce-l cinsteau. Poate în jurul peșterii a fost chiar plantată o pădurice sacră, care va dispărea în sec. IV, când Constantin va ridica, deasupra peșterii, Biserica Nașterii Domnului.

Maria nu trebuie să fi rămas mult în grajdul în care a avut loc nașterea căci, conform Evangheliei lui Matei, când înțelepții din Orient, magii, au vizitat Betleemul, au găsit-o împreună cu copilul într-o „casă” (2,1). Într-adevăr, tradiția leagă perioada de după nașterea lui Iisus de o casă. Nu pare să fi fost proprietatea lui Iosif, ai cărui înaintași, deși originari din Betleem, emigraseră în Galileea. Mai degrabă putea aparține rudelor, din neamul lui David ca și el. După câteva zile de viață (versiunea Luca) sau după câteva luni (versiunea

Matei), Iisus va părăsi această casă și, după o eventuală perioadă în Egipt determinată de persecuția lui Irod (Matei 2,1-23), va merge în Nazaret, localitate ce va deveni „satul său”, „patria sa”. Va crește în casa lui Iosif, tatăl său, sub ocrotirea acestuia și a Mariei, mama sa.

4.2.3. Data: anul 7/6 î.H.

Este incontestabil că Iisus s-a născut în timpul împăratului roman Octavianus Augustus (29 î.H.-14 d.H.) și al lui Irod, regele iudeilor (37-4 î.H.) (v. Matei 2,1; Luca 1,5; 2,1). Având în vedere că Irod a murit în martie sau aprilie anul 750 de la fondarea Romei (Antichități 17,8,1), nu putem trece de anul 4 î.H. Această curioasă anomalie cronologică – Iisus se naște înaintea erei creștine – se datorează erorii comise de Dionisius Exiguus (cel Mic) în sec. VI. Când acest călugăr a vrut să fixeze începutul erei creștine, l-a fixat în anul 754 de la fondarea Romei și nu în anul 750, anul morții lui Irod, respectiv cu cel puțin patru ani mai târziu. Pe de altă parte, reflecțiile din paragraful anterior asupra censului lui Irod indică anul 7/6 î.H. ca dată înainte de care nu se poate situa nașterea lui Iisus. Faptul că Irod decide să fie uciși toți copiii din Betleem și din împrejurimi „de doi ani și mai jos” (Matei 2,16) arată că, potrivit Evangheliei lui Matei, nașterea lui Iisus trebuie situată într-o marjă de timp nu mai mare de trei ani înainte de moartea lui Irod, care se produce când, după datele din aceeași evanghelie (2,19), familia sa este în Egipt. Pare limpede, deci, că este vorba de intervalul dintre anii 7/6 și 4 î.H. Se poate preciza mai mult? Totul depinde de valoarea cronologică ce se atribuie informațiilor aduse de Evanghelia lui Matei, concret fenomenului stelei văzute de înțelepții din Orient (2,2.9-10) și identificate de ei drept semn al nașterii regelui iudeilor. Trebuie spus că relația dintre o stea și nașterea unui mare personaj este frecventă în Antichitate. Astfel, Cicero (*Despre divinație* 1,23,47) spune că în noaptea în care a ars marele templu al Artemidei din Efes și s-a născut Alexandru cel Mare, înțelepții persani au văzut în asta prevestirea nașterii unui mare personaj care va pune în pericol întreaga Asie. Și nașterea lui Augustus și a lui Mithridate a fost însoțită de semne cerești. Motivul stelei are, deci, ecouri elenistice și orientale incontestabile. Din punct de vedere astronomic, steaua menționată în Matei 2 poate fi interpretată drept o novă foarte

strălucitoare (care a apărut în martie și aprilie 5 î.H., după astronomii chinezi și coreeni), sau drept conjuncția lui Jupiter și Saturn în constelația Peștilor, care s-a repetat de trei ori (mai-iunie, septembrie-octombrie, decembrie) în cursul anului 7 î.H. sau conjuncția lui Jupiter, Saturn și Marte (februarie 6 î.H.) sau alinierea lui Jupiter cu Luna cu ocultarea lui Jupiter în constelația Peștilor („constelația iudaică”) (20 februarie anul 5 î.Hr.). Sau – mai probabil – convergența tuturor acestor date. M. Kidger identifică amintita novă cu DO Aquilae.

Pe de altă parte, tema stelei are o componentă literară foarte iudaică. Considerațiile astronomice sunt inseparabile de referința la oracolele lui Valaam (Balaam), un înțelept neevreu care profețise apariția unui mare rege în sânul poporului evreu: „o stea răsare din Iacov; un toiag [sceptru] se ridică din Israel” (Numerii 24,17). Se știe că acest pasaj era citit în cheie mesianică în Targum, traducerea în aramaică a Bibliei, obișnuită în sinagogi deja în sec. I d.H. Targum interpreta astfel acest verset: „un rege se va ridica din Iacob și Mesia va fi uns în Israel” (Targum Onkelos). Așadar, motivul stelei reunește două sensibilități: greco-romană și iudaică.

Dacă ne raportăm la computul siriac, pe care pare a-l utiliza Luca (3,1) în fixarea începutului activității publice a lui Iisus, nașterea lui ar trebui să fie situată între 1 octombrie anul 7 î.Hr. și 30 septembrie 6 î.Hr. (v. 4.5.1.). Stabilirea, mai departe, a lunii și a zilei devine mai degrabă ipotetică. Toate încercările de a elucida data exactă se lovesc de lipsa datelor. Și, în ciuda eforturilor pentru rezolvarea problemei, atât cu ajutorul datelor astronomice, cât și pornind de la computurile calendarelor antice, cercetările sfârșesc de obicei în pure conjecturi. De fapt, cel mai mare interes pentru creștinii din primele secole l-a prezentat data celebrării Paștelui, o dată ce depinde de fazele lunii și, ca atare, e mobilă. În schimb, Crăciunul, de când a fost fixat în sec. IV în timpul lui Constantin, se celebrează la o dată fixă: 25 decembrie.

De solstițiul de iarnă, perioada din an când ziua începe să se mărească și crește lumina soarelui, era deja legată sărbătoarea romană a soarelui neînvins, *sol invictus*, foarte populară în tot Imperiul în sec. III. Soarele neînvins este personificat de diferite figuri, ca aceea a lui Mithra, zeul care are în mâini un cuțit și o torță cu care luminează în întuneric, născut dintr-o piatră și asistat de păstori; dar *sol invictus* este reprezentat și de imaginea împăratului, echivalat cu astrul solar și reprezentat cu attributele lui de suveran al

universului, autentică manifestare a divinității. Sărbătoarea creștină implică și ea imaginea soarelui și a luminii care crește odată cu Iisus Hristos, „soarele ce vine din cer [„Răsăritul cel de Sus”], în exprimarea evangheliilor (Luca 1,78), și, de aceea, unicul care merită să fie adorat ca „Dumnezeu din Dumnezeu, lumină din lumină”, în formularea crezului niceo-constantinopolitan (385 d.Hr.).

Prin urmare, din cauza lacunelor de informație existente în izvoarele istorice, nu știm ziua în care s-a născut Iisus, și de aceea, data de 25 decembrie are o valoare redusă din punctul de vedere al istoriei lui (este o posibilitate din 365!). Valoarea ei este însă mare din punctul de vedere al istoriei creștinismului, căci stabilirea sărbătorii nașterii lui Iisus, coincidând cu solstițiul de iarnă și sărbătoarea soarelui neînvins, reprezintă începutul declinului religiei greco-romane și ascensiunea, în tot Imperiul, a religiei creștine.

4.3. PĂRINȚI ȘI FAMILIE

4.3.1. Părinții, Iosif și Maria

Iisus este prezentat în izvoarele documentare ca „fiul lui Iosif” (Luca 3,23; 4,22 și Ioan 6,42), „fiul lui Iosif din Nazaret” (Ioan 1,45), „fiul tâmplarului”¹, dar și ca „fiul Mariei” (Marcu 6,3). E evident că pe mama lui Iisus o cheamă Maria: la fel este numită și în Faptele Apostolilor 1,14. Numele Mariei, ca mamă a lui Iisus, lipsește din Evanghelia după Ioan, din rațiuni interne scrierii, dar este prezent atât în Matei (1,18; 2,11; 13,35), cât și în Marcu (6,3) și Luca (1,41-42; 2,5-7; 2,34). Asta nu înseamnă că în diverse circumstanțe nu sunt referiri la „mama” lui Iisus și în Ioan, deși nu i se menționează numele: în vizita pe care ea și frații lui Iisus i-o fac la Cafarnaum (Marcu 4,31-35 || Matei 12,46-50 || Luca 8,19-21), în episodul nunții din Cana (Ioan 2,1-12) și în episodul de lângă cruce (Ioan 19,25-27; v. și 6,42). Iosif și Maria formează o familie legitimă și acest lucru este exprimat în diferite texte care-l numesc pe Iosif „soțul” Mariei (Matei 1,16.19)² sau care spun că Iosif și Maria erau uniți „prin acord matrimonial”, ceea ce-i leagă pe cei implicați ca soț și soție (Matei 1,18-19; Luca 1,27; 2,5).

Tocmai aici începe însă dificultatea legată de geneza lui Iisus. Cum am menționat, Iosif și Maria sunt legal soț și soție dar, înainte să aibă loc nunta și să înceapă conviețuirea, Maria rămâne însărcinată cu un băiat, care va fi primul ei copil. Această anomalie este exprimată în diferite feluri. În primul rând, în Nazaret, satul ei, Iisus este numit „fiul Mariei” (Marcu 6,3), nu doar „fiul lui Iosif”, cum este obiceiul în lumea biblică și iudaică, în care linia genealogică folosită pentru a desemna filiația cuiva este, aproape întotdeauna, cea paternă, nu cea maternă. În acest sens, Luca 3,23 se referă la Iosif cu următoarea precizare: „[Iisus] precum se socotea, fiu al lui Iosif.”

¹ În Biblia Ortodoxă românească: „fiul teslarului”.

² În Biblia Ortodoxă românească: „logodnicul”.

IMAGE

9:6 depends on the belief that man represents God, so that an injury done to a man is an injury done to God himself (cf. also Jas. 3:9).

BIBLIOGRAPHY. K. H. Bernhardt, *Gott und Bild*, 1956; A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 1964, pp. 171-227; D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, 1953; G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 1962; D. J. A. Clines, *TynB* 19, 1968, pp. 53-103; J. Barr, *BJRL* 51, 1968-9, pp. 11-26; J. M. Miller, *JBL* 91, 1972, pp. 289-304; T. N. D. Mettinger, *ZAW* 86, 1974, pp. 403-424; J. F. A. Sawyer, *JTS* 25, 1974, pp. 418-426; E. M. Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels* (diss.), 1984. D.J.A.C.

II. In the New Testament

The NT teaching builds on the foundation laid in the OT. There man is described (in the seminal passage of Gn. 1:26f.) as made to be God's representative on earth and to act as God's vicegerent and steward of creation. The term is best thought of as functional, and man's destiny as man is in view (see, in particular, D. J. A. Clines' essay for details and exegetical support).

The two passages of 1 Cor. 11:7 and Jas. 3:9 re-echo this teaching, and both assert the continuance of man's position in the created order and as reflecting the divine 'glory', in spite of human sinfulness. The emphasis in the NT, however, falls more on the person of Jesus Christ who is called the 'image of God' (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; both are creed-like passages, set on a polemical background, to oppose current false or inadequate notions). Christ's rank as the 'image' of the Father derives from his unique relationship as pre-existent. He is the Logos from all eternity (Jn. 1:1-18), and so he is able to reflect faithfully and fully the glory of the invisible God. See too Heb. 1:1-3 and Phil. 2:6-11 where parallel expressions are used to clarify the unique relationship of Jesus Christ to God. 'Image' (or its equivalent terms, 'form', 'stamp', 'glory') does not suggest a mere likeness to God or a paradigm of his person. Rather it connotes a sharing in the divine life and indeed an 'objectivization' of the essence of God, so that the One who is by nature invisible comes to visible expression in the figure of his Son (see the evidence in R. P. Martin, *op. cit.*, pp. 112f.).

He is thus the 'ultimate Adam' (1 Cor. 15:45) who stands at the head of a new humanity that draws its life from him. So Jesus Christ is both the unique 'Image' and the prototype of those who owe their knowledge of God and life in God to him (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:2).

The term 'image of God' is closely connected with 'the new man' (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10f.; cf. Gal. 3:28). This is a reminder that there are important social aspects to what the 'image' means as it is reproduced in human lives, both in the fellowship of the church and in man's custodianship of nature (Heb. 2:8, referring to Ps. 8).

There is an eschatological dimension also to be recognized. The fulfilment of God's plan for humanity-in-Christ awaits the parousia when Christians' mortal existence will be transformed to a perfect likeness to their Lord (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:20-21), and in this way the image of God in man will be fully restored.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. D. J. A. Clines, *TynB* 19, 1968, pp. 53-103 (bibliography); J. Jervell, *Imago Dei. Gen. 1, 26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen*, 1960; F.-W. Eltester, *Elkon*

im Neuen Testament, 1958; R. Scroggs, *The Last Adam*, 1966; and R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi. Philippians 2:5-11*, 1983; *idem*, *NIDNTT* 2, pp. 284-293; H. Kuhli, *EDNT* 1, pp. 388-391. On the dogmatic issues, see G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, 1962. R.P.M.

IMMANUEL (Heb. 'immānū'ēl, 'with us is God'). The word is found twice in OT (Is. 7:14; 8:8) and once in NT (Mt. 1:23, RSV 'Emmanuel'). It may be employed also in Is. 8:10.

To understand the significance of the word, which in itself means 'God with us', we must note the context in which it appears. Syria and Israel had desired to form a coalition with Judah in order to oppose the increasing power of Assyria. Judah had vacillated, and Syria and Israel determined to punish her. Upon hearing this news, Ahaz trembled. Isaiah was sent to him to inform him that he had nothing to fear. The power of his enemies was about played out, and they could do him no harm. Isaiah even commanded him to ask for a sign in confirmation of the divine message. This Ahaz refused to do. Hence, in reply to the hypocritical king, Isaiah announces that the Lord will give to the people of Judah a sign. In vision the prophet beholds a virgin ('*almā*', i.e. an unmarried woman), who is with child and about to bear a son and she will call his name Immanuel.

In any interpretation of this prophecy there are three factors which must be kept in mind.

a. The birth of the child is to be a sign. It is true that in itself a sign need not be a miracle, but in this particular context, after the command issued to Ahaz to ask for a sign deep or high, one would be justified in expecting a sign such as the recession of the shadow on the sundial. There should be something unusual in the birth; a birth in the ordinary course of nature would not seem to meet the requirements of the sign. In this connection it must be noted that the question is made more difficult by the fact that there cannot be a local reference of the prophecy to Hezekiah, because Hezekiah had already been born.

b. The mother of the child is an unmarried woman. Why did Isaiah designate her by this particular word '*almā*'? It is sometimes said that had he wished to teach a virgin birth there was a good word at his disposal, namely, *b'tulā*. But an examination of the usage of the latter word in OT reveals that it was very unsatisfactory, in that it would have been ambiguous. The word *b'tulā* may designate a virgin, but when it does the explanatory phrase 'and a man had not known her' is often added (cf. Gn. 24:16). The word may also designate a betrothed virgin (cf. Dt. 22:23ff.). In this latter case the virgin is known as the wife ('*isā*') of the man, and he as her husband ('*iš*'). But the word *b'tulā* may also indicate a married woman (Joel 1:8). On the basis of this latter passage a tradition arose among the Jews in which the word could clearly refer to a married woman. Had Isaiah employed this word, therefore, it would not have been clear what type of woman he had in mind, whether virgin or married. Other Heb. words which were at his disposal would not be satisfactory. Had he wished to designate the mother as a young woman he would most likely have employed the common term *na'arā* ('girl'). In using the word '*almā*', however, Isaiah employs the one word which is never applied (either in the Bible or in the other Near

deepening bond of sympathy and service (cf. Rev. 19:10; Lk. 15:10). The concept of the personal guardian angel has sharpened, as in the rabbinic literature (Mt. 18:10; cf. *SB*, *ad loc.*; and on Acts 12:15). Special missions of communication to individuals are not lacking: the visitation of Gabriel to Daniel may be compared with that to Zechariah (Lk. 1:11–20) and Mary (Lk. 1:26–38; cf. also Mt. 1–2 *passim*; Acts 8:26; 10:3ff.; 27:23, etc.). The role of active succour to humanity is perceived in Acts 5:19f.; 12:7–10, which recalls Elijah under the juniper tree. God's throne is surrounded by countless myriads of angels, as Daniel had already declared (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11, etc.).

The OT implies that angels were the joyful witnesses of, though not necessarily active participants in, God's act of creation (Jb. 38:7). In the NT they are closely associated with the giving of the law (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2), and it is not inconsistent that they should be coupled with final judgment (Mt. 16:27; Mk. 8:38; 13:27; Lk. 12:8f.; 2 Thes. 1:7f., etc.). It may be their special task also to carry the righteous dead into Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16:22f.). Little is attempted by way of direct description of the angelic form. There are hints of lustrous countenance and apparel, of awesome, other-worldly beauty, which Christian art has attempted to express in its own way (Mt. 28:2f. and parallels; Lk. 2:9; Acts 1:10). The OT shows a comparable restraint in dealing with the *cherubim (Ezk. 10) and *seraphim (Is. 6). The splendour on the face of the condemned Stephen reflects the angelic loveliness (Acts 6:15). The incarnate Christ received the angelic ministry on several occasions (Mt. 4:11; Lk. 22:43), and he could have commanded thousands of angels, had he been prepared, at Gethsemane or anywhere else, to deviate from the appointed sacrificial path (Mt. 26:53).

There is a strange undertone of hostility or suspicion towards angels in certain passages. This has interesting though unconnected parallels in the rabbinic literature. Rom. 8:38 refers to fallen angels, and this explains also the puzzling passage 1 Cor. 11:10, which should be read in the light of Gn. 6:1ff. Some special exegesis is still necessary for Gal. 1:8 and 1 Cor. 13:1, also for the stern warning of Col. 2:18. It was doubtless through doctrinal errors on the part of his readers that the writer to the Hebrews urged so forcefully the superiority of the Son to any angel (Heb. 1).

The essential meaning of Jude 9 (partial parallel 2 Pet. 2:10f.) would seem to be that fallen angels retain from their first condition a status and dignity such that even their unfallen former companions may not revile them, but must leave the final condemnation to God. The incident referred to by Jude is said to have been recorded in the *Assumption of Moses*, a fragment of apocalyptic midrash. There Satan claims the body of Moses for his kingdom of darkness, because Moses killed the Egyptian (Ex. 2:12), and was therefore a murderer, whatever his subsequent virtues may have been. The final honours do not go to Satan, but even Michael the archangel must bridle his tongue before the foe of mankind.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 1949, pp. 141–149, and similar manuals; H. Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1950, pp. 201–219; *TDNT* 1, pp. 74–87; *NIDNTT* 1, pp. 101–105, 449–454 (with biblios.). For rabbinic background, see *SB*, under particular NT passages; R. A. Stewart,

Rabbinic Theology, 1961. For Qumran aspect, Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, 1962, pp. 229–242. R.A.S.

ANGEL OF THE LORD. The angel of the Lord, sometimes 'the angel of God' or 'my (or 'his') angel', is represented in Scripture as a heavenly being sent by God to deal with men as his personal agent and spokesman. In many passages he is virtually identified with God and speaks not merely in the name of God but as God in the first person singular (e.g. with Hagar, Gn. 16:7ff.; 21:17f.; at the sacrifice of Isaac, Gn. 22:11ff.; to Jacob, Gn. 31:13, 'I am the god of Beth-el'; to Moses at the burning bush, Ex. 3:2; with Gideon, Jdg. 6:11ff.). Sometimes he is distinguished from God, as in 2 Sa. 24:16; Zc. 1:12f.; but Zechariah does not consistently maintain the distinction (cf. Zc. 3:1f.; 12:8).

In the NT there is no possibility of the angel of the Lord being confused with God. He appears as *Gabriel in Lk. 1:19, though from Acts 8:26, 29 some would infer an identification with the Holy Spirit. In function, the angel of the Lord is the agent of destruction and judgment (2 Sa. 24:16; 2 Ki. 19:35; Ps. 35:5f.; Acts 12:23); of protection and deliverance (Ex. 14:19; Ps. 34:7; Is. 63:9, 'the angel of his presence'; Dn. 3:28; 6:22; Acts 5:19; 12:7, 11); he offers guidance and gives instructions (Gn. 24:7, 40; Ex. 23:23; 1 Ki. 19:7; 2 Ki. 1:3, 15; Mt. 2:13, 19; Acts 8:26); he gives advance warning about the birth of Samson (Jdg. 13:3ff.), John the Baptist (Lk. 1:11ff.) and Jesus (Mt. 1:20, 24; Lk. 2:9). He is not recognized at once in Jdg. 13:3ff. and is not even visible to Balaam (Nu. 22:22ff.); but mostly when appearing to men he is recognized as a divine being, even though in human form, and is addressed as God (Gn. 16:13, etc.). J.B.Tr.

ANGELS OF THE CHURCHES. The 'seven stars' of the Patmos vision are explained as referring to 'the angels (*angeloi*) of the seven churches' (Rev. 1:20), to whom the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 are then addressed. The 'angel' concept is problematic. It is often taken either of guardian angels or of human leaders or bishops of the churches. Both suggestions involve difficulty. Elsewhere in Rev. *angelos* certainly means 'angel', but the 'angel' can scarcely be made to share responsibility for the sins of the church. The interpretation 'bishop' seems contrary to usage, and unsupported by effective parallels. There is no such emphasis on episcopacy as later in Ignatius. Nor can this view be based on the inferior reading 'your wife' in 2:20 (*sou* inserted by dittography). And again it would be strange to hold one man individually and absolutely responsible for the church. *angelos* is literally 'messenger', but the initially attractive idea that the *angeloi* might be messengers appointed by the churches breaks down for a combination of similar reasons.

The real difficulty is probably that the image belongs to a context and genre which eludes the logic of modern categories. *angelos* must be rendered verbally as 'angel', but the verbal equivalence does not sufficiently explain the underlying thought. The 'angel' is perhaps something like a heavenly counterpart of the church. In practice we may visualize this as amounting to a personification of the church, even if this does less than justice to the connotations of the original concept. C.J.H.

tribune Placidus during the Jewish revolt. A well and some ruins (Tell el-'Azeimeh) remain. N.H.

BETHLEHEM (Heb. *bēṭ lehem*, 'house of bread', the latter word probably in the wider sense, 'food'). It has been suggested that the final word *lehem* is Lakhmu, an Assyrian deity; but there is no evidence that this god was ever revered in Palestine. There are two towns of the name in the OT, both today given the Arabic name Bayt Lahm, the exact equivalent of the Hebrew.

1. The famed city of David, as it came to be styled. It lies 9 km S of Jerusalem. Its earlier name was Ephrath (Gn. 35:19), and it was known as Bethlehem Judah, or Bethlehem Ephrathah, to distinguish it from the other city of the same name. Rachel's tomb was near it; David's ancestors lived there; the Philistines placed a garrison there; and the Messiah was destined to be born there. Jesus was accordingly born there, and the stories of the shepherds and the Magi centre upon it. Bethlehem suffered at the hands of Hadrian in the 2nd century AD, and all Jews were expelled from it; and it seems that the site of the nativity grotto was lost for two centuries; so the Church of the Nativity erected by Helena in the reign of Constantine may or may not mark the true site.

2. The second Bethlehem lay in Zebulunite territory (Jos. 19:15); it is 11 km NW of Nazareth. Most scholars think the judge Ibzan (Jdg. 12:8) was a resident of it, but ancient tradition favours Bethlehem Judah.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. *NEAEHL*, pp. 203-210; C. Kopp, *Holy Places of the Gospels*, 1963. D.F.P.

BETH-MARCABOTH (Heb. *bēṭ hammar-kābōṭ*, 'house of chariots'). A part of the allotment to Simeon (Jos. 19:5; 1 Ch. 4:31). The site is uncertain but, being connected with Ziklag and Hormah, was probably a strong-point on the Judaeen-Philistine border. The name suggests that the settlement may have been a Canaanite arsenal in the days of the conquest. The possession of chariots by the Canaanites prevented the unmounted Hebrew soldiers from entirely occupying the land (Jdg. 19). R.J.W.

BETH-NIMRAH. 'House of pure water' or 'House of leopard', a city in Gad (Nu. 32:36), probably equalling Nimrah (Nu. 32:3) and Nimrim (Is. 15:6; Je. 48:34). By Eusebius, called Betham-Naram and located 8 km N of Livias. Possibly either modern Tell Nimrin beside the Wadi Shaib or nearby Tell Bileibil, some 24 km E of Jericho. G.W.G.

BETH-PEOR (lit. 'Temple of Peor'). A place in the hill country in the land of Moab (Jos. 13:20) or of the Amorites (Dt. 4:46), to the E of Jordan, which was part of Reubenite territory. The historical framework of Deuteronomy describes the Hebrews gathering at Mt Pisgah near to Beth-peor to receive their final exhortation before going over into the Promised Land (Dt. 3:29; 4:44-46). Having repeated the law to the immigrants, Moses died, and was buried nearby (Dt. 34:5-6). Beth-peor may be near, or even the same as, Peor, where Balaam built seven altars (Nu. 23:28). Nu. 25:1-5

BETHSHEAN, BETHSHAN

mentions the worship of a god Baal Peor (Lord of Peor) by the Moabites. The site is uncertain.

R.J.W.

BETHPHAGE (in Aram. 'place of young figs'). A village on the Mount of Olives, on or near the road from Jericho to Jerusalem and near Bethany (Mt. 21:1; Mk. 11:1; Lk. 19:29). Its site is unknown. See *ZPEB*, p. 112. J.W.M.

BETH-SAIDA. A town on the N shores of Galilee, near the Jordan. The name is Aramaic, meaning 'house of fishing' (if *bēṭ saydā*) or else 'fisherman's house' (if *bēṭ sayyādā*). Philip the tetrarch rebuilt it and gave it the name Julias, in honour of Julia the daughter of Augustus. Pliny and Jerome tell us that it was on the E of the Jordan, and there are two likely sites, al-Tell or Mas'adiya. (The two are close together, the latter being nearer the actual shore.) But in Mk. 6:45 the disciples were sent from E of the Jordan to Bethsaida, towards Capernaum (cf. Jn. 6:17); hence a second Beth-saida has been postulated W of the Jordan—perhaps to be located at 'Ayn al-Tabigha. This is also claimed to be Beth-saida 'of Galilee' (Jn. 12:21), since the political division Galilee may not have extended E of the Jordan. But this is unlikely; 'Galilee' is not necessarily used in the technical sense. A suburb of Julias on the W bank may suit Mk. 6:45 best; Capernaum was not far away. D.F.P.

BETHSHEAN, BETHSHAN. A city situated at the important junction of the Valley of *Jezreel with the Jordan valley. The name occurs in the Bible as *bēṭ š'ān* (Jos. 17:11, 16; Jdg. 1:27; 1 Ki. 4:12; 1 Ch. 7:29) and *bēṭ šān* (1 Sa. 31:10, 12; 2 Sa. 21:12). The name is preserved in the modern village of Beisān, adjacent to which stands Tell el-Husn, the 80 m high ruin mound which covers nineteen successive layers of occupation, excavated by C. S. Fisher (1921-3), A. Rowe (1925-8), G. M. Fitzgerald (1930-3), Y. Yadin and J. Geva (1983) and A. Mazar (1989-). The city was almost continuously occupied from Chalcolithic to modern times and for a long time was the most important Egyptian stronghold in the north.

Though a deep sounding was made, revealing settlements of the 4th millennium and an important Canaanite city of the Early Bronze Age, the main excavations were devoted to the 9 upper levels which extended from the 14th century BC to Islamic times. During much of the earlier part of this period, Bethshean was an Egypt. fortified outpost. Already in the 15th century Tuthmosis III mentions it as under his control (scarabs bearing his name were found there), and in the following century one of the Amarna letters speaks of reinforcements sent to garrison *bīt-sa-a-ni* on behalf of Egypt. The earliest main level (IX) probably belongs to this century (the levels have been redated on the basis of pottery sequence, since the original dates of the excavators relied on less certain criteria), and in this an extensive temple dedicated to 'Mekal, the Lord (Ba'al) of Bethshan' was uncovered, in which were found the remains of a sacrificed 3-year-old bull (*SACRIFICE AND OFFERING).

Level VIII was comparatively unimportant, dating from about the end of the 14th century, but

Eastern sources) to anyone but an unmarried woman. This unmarried woman might have been immoral, in which case the birth could hardly have been a sign. We are left then with the conclusion that the mother was a good woman and yet unmarried; in other words, the birth was supernatural. It is the presence of this word *'almâ* which makes an application of the passage to some local birth difficult, if not impossible.

c. We must note the force of the term Immanuel. A natural reading of the passage would lead us to expect that the presence of God is to be seen in the birth of the child himself. This interpretation, however, is seriously disputed, and vigorously rejected by most modern writers on the passage. The presence of God is found, rather, so we are told, in the deliverance of Judah from her two northern enemies. The infancy of the child is made the measure of time that would elapse until the two enemies are removed. Such a period of time would be short—a child learns the difference between good and evil at a tender age. Hence, within, say, 2 years, or possibly even less, Judah would have nothing to fear from Syria and Israel. In this deliverance the presence of God would be manifested, and as a token or pledge of this deliverance some mother would call her child Immanuel.

This interpretation poses tremendous problems which it does not answer. What warrant would a mother have for naming her particular child Immanuel? How could she know that her own child and no other would be a sign that in 2 years or so the presence of God would be manifested in the deliverance of Judah from Syria and Israel? Furthermore, how would Israel itself know that a particular child had been born in answer to the prophecy and that the birth of this particular child would be the promised sign? It would seem that, if the prophecy refers to a local birth, the child to be born must be someone prominent. The most prominent person, namely Hezekiah, is ruled out, and therefore we must assume that it is a child of Isaiah or some other child of Ahaz. But this is also ruled out by the word *'almâ*. Neither the wife of Ahaz nor the wife of Isaiah could properly be designated an *'almâ*, for the obvious reason that both were married women.

It seems best, then, to apply the name Immanuel to the Child himself. In his birth the presence of God is to be found. God has come to his people in a little Child, that very Child whom Isaiah later names 'Mighty God' (*'ēl gibbôr*). This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that Isaiah is seeking to dissuade men from trusting the Assyrian king. The nation's help rests not in Assyria but in God. In this dark moment God is with his people. He is found in the birth of a Child.

The infancy of the divine Child is a measure of the time that will elapse until Ahaz is freed from the fear of his two northern enemies (Is. 7:15-16). Ahaz rejects the sign of Immanuel, and turns to the king of Assyria. That king and his successors caused Judah's downfall, but for the remnant there was given the promise of Immanuel, and in Immanuel they would find their hope and salvation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1, 1964; E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, 1856, 2, pp. 26-66; J. G. Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, 1930; J. Lindblom, *A Study on the Immanuel Section in Isaiah*, 1957/8; J. S. Wright, C. Brown, *NIDNTT* 2, pp. 86f.

E.J.Y.

INCARNATION.

I. Meaning of the word

Neither the noun 'incarnation' nor the adjective 'incarnate' is biblical, but the Gk. equivalent of Lat. *in carne* (*en sarki*, 'in flesh') is found in some important NT statements about the person and work of Jesus Christ. Thus the hymn quoted in 1 Tim. 3:16 speaks of 'he was manifested in the flesh' (so RSV, following the true text). John ascribes to the spirit of antichrist any denial that Jesus Christ has 'come in the flesh' (1 Jn. 4:2; 2 Jn. 7). Paul says that Christ did his reconciling work 'in his body of flesh' (Col. 1:22; cf. Eph. 2:15), and that by sending his Son 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' God 'condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom. 8:3). Peter speaks of Christ dying for us 'in the flesh' (*sarki*, dative of reference: 1 Pet. 3:18; 4:1). All these texts are enforcing from different angles the same truth: that it was precisely by coming and dying 'in the flesh' that Christ secured our salvation. Theology calls his coming the incarnation, and his dying the atonement.

What does *'flesh' mean in these texts? In the Bible this word (Heb. *bāšār*, *š'ēr*; Gk. *sarx*) has fundamentally a physiological meaning: 'flesh' is the solid stuff which, together with blood and bones, makes up the physical organism of a man or animal (cf. Gn. 2:21; Lk. 24:39; 1 Cor. 15:50). Since Heb. thought associates bodily organs with psychical functions, we find that in the OT 'flesh' can cover the psychological as well as the physical aspects of man's personal life (cf. the parallelism between 'flesh' and 'heart', Ps. 73:26, and between 'flesh' and 'soul', Ps. 63:1). The word, however, bears more than a merely anthropological significance. The Bible sees physical flesh as a theologically significant symbol—a symbol, namely, of the created and dependent sort of life which men and animals share, a sort of life which is derived from God and which, unlike God's own life, requires a physical organism to sustain it in its characteristic activity. Hence 'flesh' becomes a generic term for men, or animals, or men and animals together (cf. Gn. 6:12; 7:15, 21f.), viewed as creatures of God, whose life on earth lasts only for the comparatively short period during which God supplies the breath of life in their nostrils. 'Flesh' in this theologically developed sense is thus not something that a man *has*, but something that he *is*. Its mark is creaturely weakness and frailty (Is. 40:6), and in this respect it stands in contrast with 'spirit', the eternal and unflagging energy that is of God, and is God (Is. 31:3; cf. 40:6-31).

To say, therefore, that Jesus Christ came and died 'in the flesh' is to say that he came and died in the state and under the conditions of created physical and psychical life: in other words, that he who died was man. But the NT also affirms that he who died eternally was, and continues to be, God. The formula which enshrines the incarnation therefore is that in some sense God, without ceasing to be God, was made man. This is what John asserts in the prologue of his Gospel: 'the Word' (God's agent in creation, who 'in the beginning', before the creation, not only 'was with God', but himself 'was God', Jn. 1:1-3) 'became flesh' (Jn. 1:14).

II. Origin of the belief

Such an assertion, considered abstractly against the background of OT monotheism, might seem

For 20 years Rebekah was barren, and so it is again seen that the promised seed is not to come merely through the natural means of ordinary fatherhood, but through God's supernatural creative power. Rebekah's barrenness causes Isaac to entreat the Lord, and the announcement is made to Rebekah that two children are struggling in her womb (Gn. 25:22-26). These two children, representing two nations, will follow mutually hostile courses. Isaac himself is to remain a sojourner in the land and, instead of going to Egypt in time of famine, remains at Gerar. At the sign of crisis he, like Abraham, seeks to protect his wife by introducing her as his sister. After quarrels with the herdsmen at Gerar he goes to Beersheba and finally makes an agreement with Abimelech. Mutual antagonism appears between Isaac and Rebekah, occasioned by Jacob's actions. Being deceived, Isaac pronounces the paternal blessing upon Jacob and utters a devout prophetic wish upon Esau. Isaac died at the age of 180 years, and was buried by his sons, Esau and Jacob.

In the NT his birth as the son of promise is mentioned in Rom. 4:16-21; 9:7-9; the separation between him and Ishmael is allegorized in Gal. 4:22-31; his being offered up by his father is recalled in Heb. 11:17-19; Jas. 2:21-23 (for its further influence, as in Rom. 8:32a, cf. H. J. Schoeps, *Paul*, 1961, pp. 141ff.); his being the father of Esau and Jacob is referred to in Rom. 9:10-13; his blessing of these two sons is treated in Heb. 11:20 as evidence of his faith.

E.J.Y.

ISAIAH (Heb. *y'sa'yāhū*, 'Yahweh is salvation'), son of Amoz (Heb. *'āmōš*, to be distinguished from the prophet Amos, Heb. *'āmōs*), lived in Jerusalem (Is. 7:1-3; 37:2). According to Jewish tradition, he was of royal blood; it has sometimes been inferred from the narratives and oracles of his book that he was, at any rate, of noble descent; but there is no certainty about this. As appears from the superscription to the book (1:1), he prophesied under Uzziah (791/790-740/739 BC), Jotham (740/739-732/731 BC), Ahaz (735-716/715 BC) and Hezekiah (716/715-687/686 BC). (The regnal dates are those assigned by E. R. Thiele.) He was called to be a prophet 'in the year that king Uzziah died' (6:1), i.e. in 740/739 BC; his last appearance which can be dated with certainty was at the time of Sennacherib's campaign of 701 BC (or c. 688 BC, if we assume a second campaign of Sennacherib against Jerusalem). Tradition has it that he was sawn asunder in Manasseh's reign (see the late *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, ch. 5); some see a reference to this in Heb. 11:37, but the reference is dubious and the tradition appears to have no sound historical basis. It is quite possible that Isaiah survived into Manasseh's reign; the absence of Manasseh's name from 1:1 could be due to the fact that Isaiah played no public part after Manasseh became king.

Isaiah was married; his wife is called 'the prophetess' (8:3), perhaps because she too prophesied. Two sons are mentioned, both of whom bear symbolic names (8:18)—Shear-jashub, 'Remnant will return' (7:3) and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, 'Hasten booty, speed spoil' (8:1-4).

Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries (cf. 1:1 with Mi. 1:1). Isaiah's activity was preceded by that of Amos and Hosea (Am. 1:1; Ho. 1:1). Amos and Hosea prophesied mainly against the N tribes; Isaiah and Micah concentrated their

prophecies mainly on Judah and Jerusalem (Is. 1:1). In the first half of the 8th century both Israel under Jeroboam II (c. 782-753 BC), and Judah under Uzziah, enjoyed a time of great prosperity. This was due in large measure to the weakness of the kingdom of Aram and to Assyria's non-intervention in the W for considerable periods. Uzziah's reign may be described as the most prosperous time that Judah had known since the disruption of the Monarchy after Solomon's death. Under Uzziah and Jotham prosperity and luxury abounded in Judah; we have this state of affairs reflected in Is. 2-4. But with the accession to power of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC), Assyria began once more to impose her yoke on the W lands. Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus formed an anti-Assyrian coalition and tried to compel Ahaz of Judah to join them. When Ahaz refused, they threatened to depose him and place a puppet of their own on his throne (734 BC). Isaiah's action at this time is recorded in ch. 7. Ahaz committed the sinful folly of asking the Assyrian king for aid; the result was that Judah became a satellite state of Assyria. In 732 BC the Assyrians captured Damascus and annexed the territory of Israel N of the Plain of Jezreel, leaving Hoshea to rule the remainder of the N kingdom as their vassal. When he revolted, Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) besieged Samaria, and his successor Sargon II (722-705 BC) captured it in his accession year. Even after that there were various independence movements directed against Assyrian domination. On these occasions Isaiah, who had withdrawn for a time into a smaller circle after his fruitless protest against Ahaz's foreign policy in 734 BC (8:16ff.), raised his voice again to warn Judah against participating in such movements, and particularly against relying on Egyptian aid. According to 14:28 the Philistines in the year of the death of Ahaz sent a delegation to Jerusalem to arrange an anti-Assyrian alliance; on this occasion again Isaiah uttered a warning note (14:29-32).

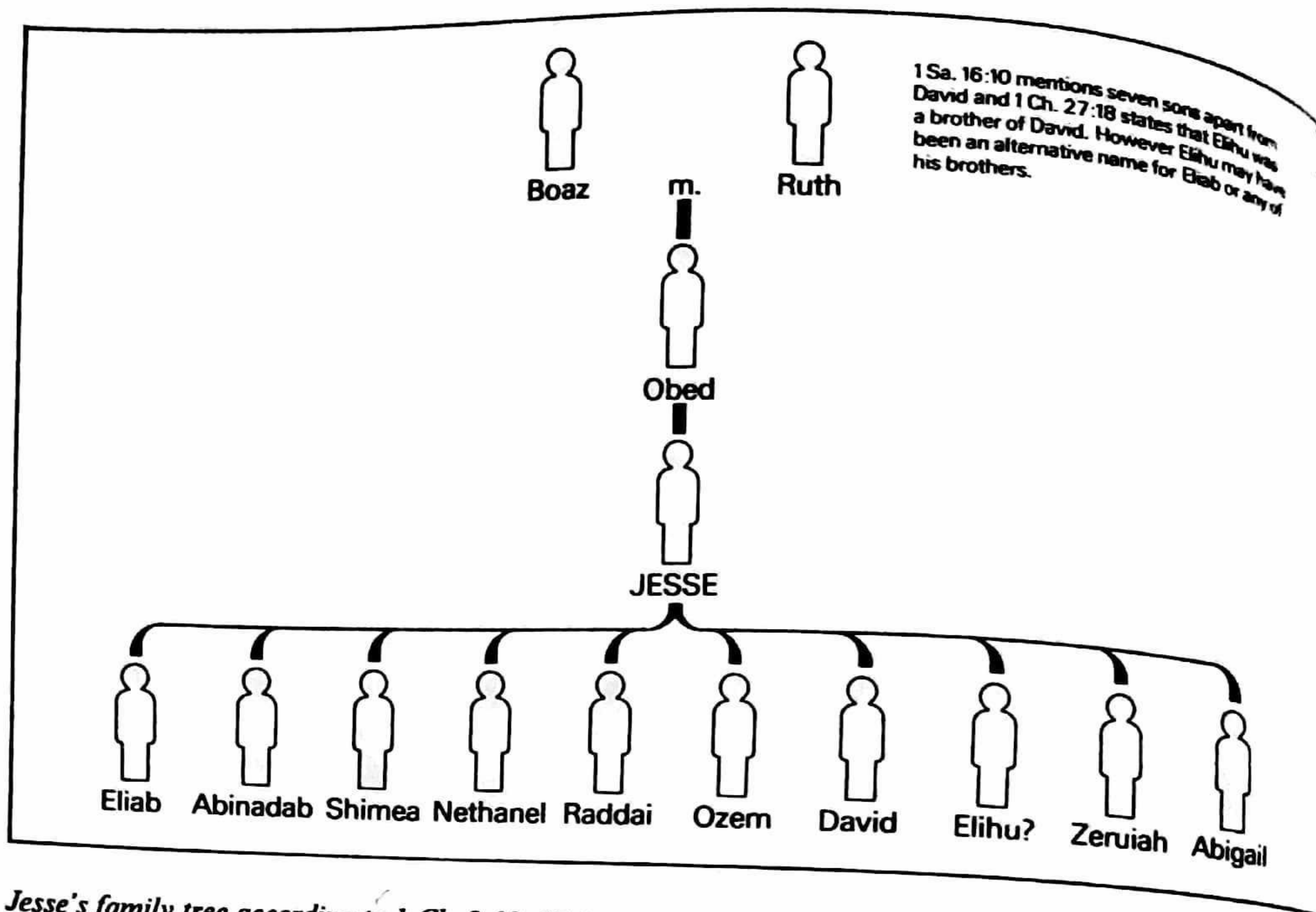
Under Hezekiah there were other movements of this kind, notably the revolt of Ashdod, which was crushed in 711 BC, when the Assyrians besieged and captured Ashdod (cf. Is. 20:1). Judah and Egypt were implicated in this revolt. It is quite possible that Is. 18 should be dated about this time, an Ethiopian dynasty was ruling in Egypt then. After Sargon's death there were widespread risings against his successor Sennacherib (705-681 BC) and Judah was one of the states which revolted; this resulted in Sennacherib's expedition of 701 BC, during which he overran Judah and besieged Jerusalem. Various oracles in chs. 28-31 may date from the years 705-701 BC, including the warnings against leaning on Egypt in 30:1-7, 31:1-3. Chs. 36-37 record Sennacherib's threat to Jerusalem, Jerusalem's liberation and Isaiah's activity throughout this time of danger. Chs. 38-39, which probably relate to the same period, tell of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, and the mission of

* Merodach-baladan.

ISAIAH, BOOK OF.

I. Outline of contents

a. *Prophecies relating to Isaiah's own time* (1:1-39:6).
(i) *Introduction* (1:1-31). Condemnation of the merely external form of worship etc. Date uncertain.



Jesse's family tree according to 1 Ch. 2:13-17 (see p. 563).

cases only conjectural, add no clear historical detail, beyond the statement that he was hanged on Passover Eve, after due trial, as a sorcerer and one who 'led Israel astray' (*Sanhedrin* 43a). Non-Christian evidence therefore substantiates the fact of Jesus' existence, his popular following, his execution and the rough date (Pilate was in office in Judaea AD 26-36).

b. Christian sources

1. Outside the NT there are numerous accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus in early Christian writings (*NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA). Some are clearly legendary, aiming to fill the gaps in the narratives of the canonical Gospels or to heighten the miraculous element. Others are apparently written to propagate Gnostic and other deviant views. While some of these works are quite early (early 2nd century), most of their historically credible material is clearly based on the canonical Gospels; only the *Gospel of Thomas* is generally treated seriously as possibly preserving independent authentic tradition, and many even of its sayings are influenced by Gnosticism, while many of the rest are paralleled in the canonical Gospels.

2. Thus in practice we are almost entirely restricted to the four canonical Gospels for evidence about Jesus. The rest of the NT contributes only a few isolated sayings and traditions (e.g. Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 11:23-25).

The reliability of the Gospels as historical sources is hotly debated. Their primary purpose is clearly more than a mere recounting of facts, but it is not so clear that their avowedly 'propagandist' purpose necessarily calls in question their historical accuracy. If the Gospels are studied in the light of comparable literature of the period, and particularly of what is known of Jewish ideas of tradition, it appears that, while there was considerable

freedom in the selection and wording of sayings and narratives, so that each writer's individual thought and purpose come out in the way he presents his material, they were essentially concerned to pass on a carefully preserved tradition of the words and deeds of Jesus. See further *Gospels, and the articles on the Gospels individually; also *Tradition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament*, 1984, R. T. France, *The Evidence for Jesus*, 1986. On b. 2: C. L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 1987; G. N. Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 1989.

II. Setting

A. Time

Jesus was born shortly before the death of *Herod the Great in 4 BC (Mt. 2:1, 13-15); the exact date cannot be determined. His public ministry began when he was 'about thirty years of age' (Lk. 3:23); this was some time after the beginning of John the Baptist's mission in, probably, AD 28 (Lk. 3:1ff.). The length of his ministry is again impossible to determine exactly, but a period of roughly 3 years is generally agreed (based on the two springtimes indicated in Mark before the final Passover, Mk. 2:23; 6:39, and the three Passovers of Jn. 2:13; 6:4; 12:1). This would suggest a date of about AD 33 for the crucifixion, and if the Gospels indicate that the Passover (Nisan 14/15) fell on a Friday in the year of the crucifixion (though this too is disputed: see *LORD'S SUPPER), the astronomical data for AD 33 would support this date. But certainty on the precise dates is impossible. (*CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY. H. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 1977; J. P. Meir, *A Marginal Jew* 1, 1991, pp. 372-433.

a Place
Practically the whole of Jesus' public ministry took place within Palestine. Only a few journeys outside Palestine are recorded, e.g. into Phoenicia and Decapolis (Mk. 7:24, 31), and to Caesarea Philippi on the slopes of Mt Hermon (Mk. 8:27). Jesus first came to the notice of John the Baptist in the Jordan valley, and John's Gospel records some early ministry in that area and in Judaea (Jn. 1:28-42; 2:13-4:3, dated before John's imprisonment, 3:24; 4:1-3, after which the Galilean ministry began, Mk. 1:14). Thereafter the main scene of ministry was Galilee, punctuated by visits to Jerusalem recorded by John in connection with festivals, until the final Passover visit.

c. Historical situation

1. Palestine had been under Roman rule for some 60 years when Jesus was born. It was indirect rule, through local princes, of whom *Herod the Great was the most famous. The division of his kingdom among his sons resulted in three regional rulers, of whom *Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea, held office throughout the period of Jesus' ministry; he is the Herod whom we meet in the Gospels outside the infancy stories. Archelaus, who took over Judaea and Samaria, was deposed after 10 years of misrule, and here direct rule was imposed, in the person of a Roman prefect, responsible to the governor of the province of Syria. The prefect during the period of Jesus' ministry was Pontius *Pilate.

Roman rule brought real benefits to the subject nation, but it was not popular. A special grievance was the system of taxation under which the already high official taxes were swollen by the unofficial rake-off of the *tax-collectors (AV 'publicans') who thus became a feared and hated group, both as extortioners and as collaborators with the occupying power. But the chief cause of resentment was the mere fact of political subjection, a position felt by many to be incompatible with Israel's status as the people of God.

2. The varying Jewish reactions to this situation may be seen in the attitudes of the 'parties' which had by this time emerged within Judaism. The priestly *Sadducees, who with the lay 'elders' exercised the effective leadership of the Jews under Roman rule (*SANHEDRIN) seem to have been more concerned with the maintenance of the *status quo* and the proper observance of the Temple ritual than with any ideological resistance to Roman rule. The *Pharisees, though in some cases willing to support insurrectionary movements, busied themselves with the law and the complex business of its rigorous application to everyday life. The *Essenes went further and opted out of all political and social involvement in favour of a monastic withdrawal. (The *DEAD SEA SCROLLS provide vivid documentation of such a separatist group at Qumran.) But there was a strong and popular movement towards political activism (*'ZEALOT', the name of one such group later in the century, is often used loosely to denote the various groups who took this stance), particularly since the abortive revolt of Judas of Galilee, provoked by the *census of AD 6. Sporadic outbreaks of insurrectionary activity, particularly in Galilee, led up eventually to the devastating Jewish War AD 66-70.

3. *Galilee, Jesus' home province, stood to some extent apart from the Jewish heartland of Judaea.

Its population, until quite recently largely Gentile, and geographically separated from Judaea by the hostile territory of Samaria, was despised by Judaeans as of questionable religious orthodoxy, if not still half-pagan. The pronounced N accent made a Galilean conspicuous in Jerusalem society. This difference of background may be a significant factor in Jesus' dealings with the Jewish authorities. It is also relevant to his reputation with the Romans, to whom 'Galilean' was almost tantamount to 'revolutionary'.

4. The languages of Palestine in the 1st century AD are a complex problem. It seems clear that Aram., Heb. and Gk. were all spoken. Aram. was most probably Jesus' vernacular, but a Galilean would almost certainly also have a working knowledge of Gk., and Heb. (in a form akin to the later Mishnaic) may well have been the medium for his debates with the religious authorities in Jerusalem.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, 1982, chs. 1-9; C. Rowland, *Christian Origins*, 1985, pp. 25-108; J. Stambaugh and D. Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians*, 1986; S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels*, 1988.

III. Birth and childhood

The details of the birth of Jesus are recorded only in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, each Gospel clearly using different sources, that of Matthew concentrating more on Joseph's side of the story, while Luke shows an intimate knowledge of Mary's experiences (and of those of her relative Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist) which it is generally agreed could only have been derived, directly or indirectly, from Mary herself. It is therefore the more remarkable that on the crucial fact of the supernatural origin of Jesus' birth, without a human father, the two Gospels with their independent sources are agreed (*VIRGIN BIRTH).

The circumstances of Jesus' birth and childhood were in striking contrast to the supernatural mode of his conception. He was born in the animal quarters of a crowded village inn, and brought up in a very ordinary home in the obscure Galilean village of *Nazareth, which had achieved no mention in earlier literature. His family may have been what we would call 'middle class', the 'carpenter' (actually more a building contractor) being a skilled craftsman, perhaps employing labour, and a respected figure in village life (*ARTS AND CRAFTS, III. c). But the Gospel records make it clear that they were not affluent (Lk. 2:24; cf. Lv. 12:8), and Jesus' parables sometimes reflect experience of a home where comfort and money were limited (e.g. Lk. 11:5-7; 15:8-10). The fact that Joseph is not mentioned after the birth and childhood stories, and that Jesus was referred to in the village as 'Mary's son' (Mk. 6:3), is often taken to mean that Joseph died while Jesus was young, leaving Jesus as the oldest son to run the family business and provide for his four younger brothers and unknown number of sisters (Mk. 6:3).

In such circumstances Jesus could not aspire to a higher education. His full knowledge of the OT Scriptures attests to his having received the normal Jewish child's education at the village *synagogue-school, and the one story of his childhood preserved in the Gospels indicates an abnormal aptitude in matters of religious debate (Lk. 2:42-50). Beyond this we know nothing of his childhood, though his later teaching shows a mind well

JESUS CHRIST, LIFE AND TEACHING OF

present healing, often of large number of people, as a regular feature of Jesus' ministry (Mk. 1:32-34; 3:7-12; 6:55f.; Lk. 7:21f.). Often coupled with his healing miracles (though usually carefully differentiated from them, e.g. Mk. 1:32-34; Lk. 13:32) are his exorcisms (*DEMON POSSESSION). Both of these activities were expected also of his disciples when they went out in his name (Mk. 6:13; Mt. 10:8), and they are integrally related with his preaching, as aspects of a total onslaught on the powers of evil, in their physical as well as their spiritual manifestation.

Healing and exorcism were an accepted part of the activity of godly men within 1st-century Judaism, but nothing approaching the intensity of Jesus' healing ministry is recorded of any contemporary figure (*HEALTH, V). The range of complaints he healed is very wide, from paralysis to blindness, and from leprosy to a severed ear. Three cases of restoring to life those who had recently died are also recorded. Unlike some contemporary exorcists, he used little or no ritual, a mere word of command being often the only means employed (Mt. 8:8f., 16). The overwhelming impression was of his simple authority over physical and spiritual evil, and his compassion for those in need. His healing ministry was not a bid for recognition, nor was it primarily designed to prove anything, but it was the automatic response of his compassion to human need when he met it.

Jesus' other ('nature') miracles are comparatively few, but again the same pattern of an automatic and unselfconscious response to a pressing need can be seen in most of them, feeding hungry crowds, supplying wine in an emergency, providing fish after a night of fishing in vain, and calming a storm on the lake. That Jesus solved such problems by miraculous means was not so much a deliberate display of power as a natural result of who he was. Only the walking on water and the sudden withering of the fig-tree seem to have been performed more to teach the nature of his person and mission than to meet a definite need.

The miracles, then, are not *the* proof of Jesus' divine nature, though they imply it. They are an inevitable part of a total ministry of deliverance and of the conquest of evil.

f. Political stance

The charge on which Jesus was finally condemned was of political sedition (Lk. 23:2): he had claimed to be 'king of the Jews'. While the title never occurs in his sayings, he did often speak about the 'kingdom of God' as the object of his mission (see below, VII. d), and such language, particularly in Galilee, was open to nationalistic interpretation. Much of his early support was probably due to hopes that he would lead a revolt against Rome, culminating in the unsuccessful attempt to force him to accept the title of 'king' (Jn. 6:14f.). After this episode his support seems to have decreased, and more of his time was spent instructing his disciples on the true nature of his mission.

Some modern writers (especially S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, 1967) have tried to show that Jesus' intentions were in fact political, and that the spiritual nature of his kingship is a later invention in the gospels to gloss over his real revolutionary aim. While Jesus was certainly not as blind to political and social problems as more pietistic Christians have suggested, Brandon's view involves a wholesale rewriting of the Gospels on very

flimsy grounds. The Jesus of the Gospels was anxious to correct misunderstandings of the nature of his mission (Mk. 8:27-38; 12:35-37; 14:61f.), avoided publicity and popular demonstrations until the last week of his ministry, refused to affirm the nationalist position when asked about the validity of Roman taxation (Mk. 12:13-17), and was declared innocent of sedition by the Roman prefect (Lk. 23:13-16). His declared attitude to the Jewish nation of his day, which he regarded as approaching its final punishment for its rejection of God's messengers in the imminent destruction of Jerusalem (Lk. 11:47-51; 13:25-35, etc.), is quite incompatible with nationalist sympathies. The circumstances of his ministry inevitably laid him open to political suspicion, but there is ample evidence that his own intentions were otherwise, even though some of his followers undoubtedly expected him to adopt a nationalist role. (*MESSIAH, II. a.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY. M. Hengel, *Victory over Violence*, 1972; M. Langley, *NIDNTT* 3, pp. 967-981; E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of his Day*, 1984.

g. Jesus' authority

The Gospels tell us that the dominant impression of Jesus' ministry was that of authority. This is true both of his boldly self-authenticating teaching (Mk. 1:22) and of his miraculous activity (Mk. 1:27; Mt. 9:8). It was his personal authority which impressed the Gentile centurion (Mt. 8:8f.), which caused his disciples to leave their homes and jobs to follow him, and which carried all before him when he strode into the Temple court and threw out the traders (Mk. 11:15-17). While Jesus himself refused to state openly the source of this authority (Mk. 11:27-33), the implication is clear that it derived from God, and his own claim to be Son of God carried the same implication. After his resurrection he declared openly his universal authority (Mt. 28:18; cf. Jn. 17:2).

VI. The close of the ministry

a. The last week in Jerusalem

Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem was deliberately undertaken with the knowledge that it would lead to the final confrontation with the authorities, culminating in his own death (Lk. 13:33; 18:31-33). It was made at *Passover time, when Jerusalem would be crowded with pilgrims, and when the themes of death and redemption were in mind. Certain incidents are of special importance.

1. *The entry.* Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem was deliberately dramatic. Instead of arriving unnoticed among the thousands of other pilgrims, he staged a conspicuous ride into the city on a donkey, while his disciples and other pilgrims greeted him with shouts of *'Hosanna' (Mk. 11:1-10). It was a visible allusion to Zc. 9:9-10, the prophecy of the king coming to Jerusalem on a donkey. Its intention was clearly to make a Messianic claim, and it was so interpreted by the crowds, who would include many of his former supporters from Galilee. The prophecy is of a king of peace, but many probably interpreted the gesture in a more militantly nationalistic sense.

2. *Cleansing the Temple.* One of Jesus' first acts on arrival was equally deliberately symbolic. He threw out from the Temple precincts the traders in sacrificial animals and in the special Temple coin-

JOSEPHUS, FLAVIUS

M. Smallwood, 1981. See also H. St J. Thackeray, *Josephus, the Man and the Historian*, 1929; J. M. Creed, 'The Slavonic Version of Josephus' History of the Jewish War', *HTR* 25, 1932, pp. 277ff.; F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the NT*, 1974, pp. 32-53; T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and his Society*, 1983; L. H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980)*, 1984; *idem* and G. Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity*, 1987; *Josephus, the Bible and History*, 1989.

F.F.B.

JOSHUA, 1. Joshua ben Nun, grandson of Elishama chief of Ephraim (1 Ch. 7:27; Nu. 1:10), was called by his family *hōšea'*, 'salvation', Nu. 13:8 (AV 'Oshea'); Dt. 32:44 Heb.; this name recurs in the tribe of Ephraim (1 Ch. 27:20; 2 Ki. 17:1; Ho. 1:1). Moses added the divine name, and called him *y'hōšua'*, normally rendered in Eng. 'Joshua'. The Gk. *Iēsous* reflects the Aram. contraction *yešū'* (cf. Ne. 3:19, etc.).

At the Exodus Joshua was a young man (Ex. 33:11). Moses chose him as personal assistant, and gave him command of a detachment from the as yet unorganized tribes to repel the raiding Amalekites (Ex. 17). As the Ephraimite representative on the reconnaissance from Kadesh (Nu. 13-14) he backed Caleb's recommendation to go ahead with invasion. *Caleb, the senior and leading figure, sometimes is mentioned alone in this connection; but it is unlikely that there was a version of the episode excluding Joshua, or that any later historian denied, or was unaware, that he too escaped the curse on the unbelieving people.

While Moses was alone before God at Sinai, Joshua kept watch; in the Tent of Meeting also he learnt to wait on the Lord; and in the years following, something of Moses' patience and meekness was doubtless added to his valour (Ex. 24:13; 32:17; 33:11; Nu. 11:28). In the plains by the Jordan he was formally consecrated as Moses' successor to the military leadership, co-ordinate with *Eleazar the priest (Nu. 27:18ff.; 34:17; cf. Dt. 3 and 31, where Joshua's position is naturally emphasized). He was then probably about 70 years old; Caleb was a remarkably vigorous 85 when he began to occupy the Judaeon hills (Jos. 15:13-15).

Joshua occupied and consolidated the area of Gilgal, fought successful campaigns against Canaanite confederacies and directed further operations as long as the united efforts of Israel were required. Settlement of the land depended on tribal initiative; Joshua sought to encourage this by a formal allocation at Shiloh, where the national sanctuary was established. The time had come for him to dissolve his command and set an example by retiring to his land at Timnath-serah in Mt Ephraim. It was perhaps at this time that he called Israel to the national covenant at Shechem (Jos. 24). Ch. 23, his farewell, may refer to the same occasion; but the substance is different, and seems to imply a later period. Joshua died aged 110, and was buried near his home at Timnath-serah.

For *JOSHUA, BOOK OF, see the following article, which also discusses some modern theories of the invasion of Canaan and of Joshua's role.

2. Joshua ben Josedech was high priest of the restoration in 537 BC. Under him the altar was rebuilt and the Temple dedicated. Progress was hindered by opposition, however, until in 520 BC he was strengthened by the prophecies of Haggai and

Zechariah, including a remarkable pattern of justification by the grace of God (Zc. 3). He was named prophetically the 'Branch' (or, 'shoot'; *semah*, Zc. 6:12). See J. Stafford Wright, *The Building of the Second Temple*, 1958, for a review of the problems in Ezra and Haggai.

3. Joshua of Beth-shemesh, owner of the field to which the ark was brought when the Philistines sent it back to Israel (1 Sa. 6:14).

J.P.U.L.

JOSHUA, BOOK OF. The book of Joshua records the invasion of Canaan by Israel and its partition among the tribes. It tells in detail how they crossed the Jordan and secured a bridgehead, describes more briefly two campaigns which broke the power of the Canaanites and summarizes Israel's further military progress. The account of the partition includes a full description of Judahite territory, and notes on the Kenite settlement of Hebron and the difficulties experienced in N Manasseh. After referring to the levitical settlements and the problem of the Transjordanian tribes, the book closes with an account of Joshua's spiritual testament, the climax being the national covenant at Shechem.

I. Outline of contents

a. The invasion of Canaan (1:1-11:23)

(i) *Change of command* (1:1-4:24). Commission; reconnaissance; the river crossing.

(ii) *The bridgehead* (5:1-8:35). Gilgal to Ai.

(iii) *Campaign in the south* (9:1-10:43). The Hivite cities; defeat of the Jerusalem confederacy; cities captured.

(iv) *Campaign in the north, and further progress* (11:1-23).

b. The settlement in Canaan (12:1-24:33)

(i) *List of defeated enemies* (12:1-24).

(ii) *The early settlements* (13:1-17:18). Unfinished tasks; Transjordan; Caleb; the land of Judah; allotments for Ephraim and Manasseh.

(iii) *Later settlements* (18:1-21:45). Shiloh conference; cities of refuge; levitical towns.

(iv) *The way ahead* (22:1-24:33). The Witness Altar; Joshua's charge; the covenant at Shechem.

II. Composition and purpose

In the Heb. Bible, Jos. heads the 'Former Prophets', which cover Israelite history from the invasion to the Exile. In immediate and natural sequence to Dt., the book extends from Joshua's assumption of command to his passing and the death of Eleazar. Chs. 1-11 form a continuous narrative, though the treatment is progressively more summary, ending with a general evaluation of Joshua's achievement (11:15-23). In whatever form the author found his material, he has made of it a story of the highest dramatic quality, alike in treatment of the subject and in narrative technique. This is no mere editing of pre-existing work; but much is omitted or generalized to get the broad picture, in due proportions, into a limited space.

A climax is reached at the end of ch. 11, but the story is not finished. The book is about Joshua's work, and about the fulfilment of God's promises in that Israel was in possession of the land 'which I swore to their fathers to give them' (1:6, cf. 23:14; 24:13). For both purposes it must give an account of the settlement, and show the position of